

1 and 2 Peter Ep 229



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

1 Peter Overview

The Book of 1 Peter provides practical guidance and encouragement for living a holy and faithful life amidst trials and suffering. It emphasizes the importance of living in obedience to God, loving one another, and placing our hope in Christ's redemptive work. The themes of suffering, endurance, and the assurance of God's grace are woven throughout the epistle, offering comfort and strength to early Christians and modern believers alike.

Authorship

The Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter commence with an authoritative declaration of the author's apostolic identity as "an apostle of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1). Eponymously named "Simon/Symeon" in accordance with the Greek and Hebrew transliterations (Acts 15:14), he shares namesake with one of the twelve sons of Jacob, adding an element of biblical symbolism to his persona. Throughout Jesus' ministry, Peter, along with James and John, held a privileged position as they were frequently singled out during sacred moments, such as the raising of Jairus' daughter, the Mount of Transfiguration, and the events at Gethsemane. Esteemed as one of the "pillars" of the church, as acknowledged by Paul, Peter's leadership role within the Twelve Apostles and his prominent position in presiding over the Jerusalem Council are firmly established.

Noteworthy in the examination of both Epistles is the conspicuous divergence observed within their Greek texts, which can be attributed, in part, to the involvement of distinct scribes. Peter himself acknowledges his collaboration with Silas in the composition of his initial letter, expressing gratitude for the assistance rendered: "With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you" (1 Peter 5:12). However, the specific contributor to the second Epistle remains undisclosed. Despite both letters exhibiting a refined Greek composition, they diverge significantly in writing styles, lexical choices, thematic emphasis, and overall organization, evincing the possibility of multiple hands shaping their contents. While Peter may have sanctioned both Epistles, it is reasonable to postulate that a well-educated, native Greek speaker played an instrumental role in the finalization of the texts, considering Peter's primary language of Aramaic as a Galilean fisherman.

In sum, the introductions of 1 and 2 Peter provide an elucidating glimpse into the identity and stature of the author, the divergences in their Greek texts hint at potential scribe involvement, and the contributions of capable Greek speakers in shaping the final letters present an intriguing facet of scholarly inquiry. The complexities inherent in these Epistles unveil an enthralling subject of research for those delving into the historical and linguistic dimensions of early Christian literature.

Outline

I. Introduction (1 Peter 1:1-2)

A. Greeting and Authorship

B. Recipients and Location

II. Living Hope through Salvation (1 Peter 1:3-12)

A. Praise for God's Mercy and Salvation

B. Rejoicing in Trials and Testing of Faith

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1.7)

Many Jewish traditions also presented the end as preceded by times of great testing. The image of the righteous being tested like precious metals purified in the furnace comes from the Old Testament (Job 23:10; Ps 12:6; Prov 17:3; cf. Is 43:2; Jer 11:4) and continued in subsequent Jewish literature (e.g., Sirach 2:5). Ores of precious metals (the most precious of which was gold) would be melted in a furnace to separate out the impurities and produce purer metal.¹

C. Prophetic Inquiry into Salvation (1 Peter 1.10-12)

The Time of the Messiah's Redemptive Act

10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: 11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. (1 Peter 1.10-12)

Throughout ancient history, prophets from various cultures and civilizations embarked on a profound quest to discern the timing and nature of the long-awaited Messiah's redemption. As exemplified during the era of Herod's Temple, the Jewish community dedicated rigorous scrutiny to their sacred scriptures in search of prophetic predictions pertaining to the advent of the Messiah. Meticulous collection and exhaustive study of these prophetic utterances ensued, underscoring the significance attributed to this eschatological pursuit among the Jewish people.

The early Christian community, in parallel, also embarked on a similar endeavor, diligently seeking ancient prophecies that foretold the coming of the Messiah.² Employing these prophetic references, they sought to establish a coherent narrative of how Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the diverse prophetic declarations, a notion expounded upon in Revelation 10:7. In this manner, the early Christians interwove

¹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, IVP Academic, 2014, p. 687.

² Dead Sea Scrolls, 1 Qp Hab II, vii. We also see this in The Psalms of Solomon. See also: Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, Abingdon Press, 1954, p. 346-450.

the tapestry of Israelite history with the life and ministry of Jesus, strategically drawing connections between the prophetic promises of old and their perceived realization in the person of Christ.

By mining the depths of antiquity for these prophetic threads, both the Jewish and early Christian communities sought to construct a compelling mosaic, depicting the fulfillment of divine prophecies in the life and mission of Jesus. This intricate interplay of scriptural exegesis and historical reflection served as a significant theological framework, imbuing the Messianic narrative with profound meaning and transformative power for the faithful.

Craig Keener explains:

Many Jewish interpreters (especially attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls) believed that the Old Testament prophets had told especially about the interpreters' own time, and that their meaning for this time had thus remained cryptic until sages of their own generation were given special insight by the Spirit. Peter here seems to assert that the prophets recognized that their prophecies applied to the Messiah who would suffer and be exalted, and that they knew that many details would make sense to the readers only once they had happened. It sounds as if Peter would, however, have agreed with the interpreters in the Dead Sea Scrolls that the Old Testament prophets did not know the "time or kind of time." That Old Testament servants of God could have the Spirit of God in them is clear (Gen 41:38; Num 27:18), although the Old Testament usually preferred the Hebrew idiom for the Spirit resting "upon" God's servants, empowering them (as in 1 Pet 4:14). According to some Jewish traditions, some secrets were so important that God kept them even from angels until the end time; in other traditions, angels respected rabbis' esoteric teachings and came to their lectures to listen; in still other traditions, angels envied Israel, who received God's law.³

III. Be Holy as God is Holy (1 Peter 1:13-25)

A. Call to Holiness and Obedience (1 Peter 1.13-16)

B. Redemption through Christ's Sacrifice (1 Peter 1:17-21)

C. The Eternal Word of God (1 Peter 1:22-25)

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Peter 1.22).

Elder Maxwell taught:

Growing out of our faith in the Lord is our sustaining of His anointed leaders, as we have done at this April conference. Faithful Church members have what Peter called an "unfeigned love of the brethren." (1 Pet. 1:22.) Collectively but not perfectly, those sustained do the work to which God has called them. As with Joseph Smith, so it is for his succeeding Brethren. The operative promise persists: namely, the people of the Church will never be turned away "by the testimony of traitors." (D&C 122:3)⁴

³ Keener, [Background](#), p. 688.

⁴ Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "[Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds](#)," *Ensign*, May 1991.

“All flesh is grass” (1 Peter 1.24). This is a quotation of Isaiah 40.6-8.

IV. Long for Spiritual Growth (1 Peter 2.1-10)

- A. Putting Away Malice, Deceit, Hypocrisy (1 Peter 2.1-3)
- B. A Living Stone and a Chosen People (1 Peter 2.4-8)
- C. Called Out of Darkness into God's Light (1 Peter 2.9-10)

V. Living Godly Lives (1 Peter 2.11-25)

- A. Exhortation to Abstain from Fleshly Desires (1 Peter 2.11-12)

Ἀγαπητοί παρακαλῶ ὡς παροίκους καὶ παρεπιδήμους ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν σαρκικῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἵτινες **στρατεύονται** κατὰ τῆς ψυχῆς·

Dearly beloved, I beseech you **as strangers and pilgrims**, abstain from fleshly lusts, which **war** against the soul (1 Peter 2.11).

Peter is warning us to not be like the world around us! To me, this word is a clue that Peter is writing to a group of people who need to recognize that they are not from this world, rather, they are from the heavens. This can be viewed as a pre-earth reference, and Peter is warning us not to become too comfortable here. We are “strangers,” we do not belong here, because we are of a royal priesthood and are a peculiar people!

- B. Submitting to Authorities and Masters (1 Peter 2.13-20)

Responsibilities to the State

In antiquity, numerous household codes were intricately linked to discussions on city management, encompassing guidance on how to interact not only with family members, elders, and friends but also with the state. These codes often portrayed the household as a reflection of the governing structure within a city-state, thus merging civic and familial obligations (2:18-3:7) in a cohesive manner. Within the contemporary framework of aristocratic ideals, ethical conduct in the household was closely intertwined with one's public responsibilities, and consequently, they were frequently addressed in tandem.

Esteemed philosophers, particularly adherents of Stoicism and other schools of thought, frequently employed these ethical codes to delineate appropriate interpersonal relationships. By doing so, they sought to establish a framework for proper conduct towards others in various social spheres. Moreover, Jewish communities and other marginalized religious groups occasionally embraced and integrated these codes into their own systems, thereby demonstrating their alignment with the values upheld by Roman society. This demonstration of compliance with Roman norms and virtues played a pivotal role in mitigating persecution and fostering social integration for these minority groups.

Submit to the King

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. (1 Peter 2.13-14)

Craig Keener offered this commentary:

Vassal kings in the East ruled their people with Rome's permission but were required to act in Rome's interests. Because most of Peter's hearers (1:1) would instead be directly under governors (2:14), by "king" Peter may refer especially to the Roman emperor. Although the emperor's title was technically princeps, i.e., "the leading citizen" or the first among equals (to preserve the myth of the republic in the early years of the empire), everyone knew that he was the supreme earthly king in the Mediterranean world.⁵

Peter Enns (commenting on a similar bit of counsel, but this time from Paul [see Romans 13.1-7]) put it this way:

First, in the Greco-Roman world, the basic social order was a household, with the father as head. This social order was then applied to the empire, where the emperor was "head of the family" (*paterfamilias*).

That "order" was not remotely thought of as changeable as in the post-Enlightenment world, where governments rule by the consent of the people. Paul's claim about God and government, therefore, was completely unexceptional for his day—part of his cultural environment and utterly natural to him and his readers. To think of Paul's words as a timeless blueprint, therefore, despite how clearly he is affirming/teaching, is a mistake.

Also remember that in Paul's day, neither Judaism nor this new Jewish subgroup of Jesus followers were considered an immediate threat to Rome, and so they all more or less got along. At another time we should not presume Paul's thinking would have remained the same—such as later in Paul's life when Christian persecutions were underway, or perhaps when Romans were killing Jews and razing their temple in AD 70.

As Luke Timothy Johnson concludes,

Paul cannot be held responsible for his practical advice later taken as divine revelation and as the basis for a Christian theology of state. That is too much weight for a few words of contingent remarks to bear.... Simply "reading it off the page" as a directive for life is to misread it and to distort it, for the world in which it made self-evident sense no longer exists and never can. (p. 201; my emphasis).

Translation: **There's more to reading the Bible faithfully than just doing what it says, no matter of clearly it seems to be telling us what to do.**

Which leads me to my point: Clear affirmations/teachings, just like everything else in the Bible, need to be seen in context. And in doing so we may come to see that when the Bible is affirming/teaching something, **that does not mean it is binding.** It may mean that is no longer is.⁶

James E. Talmage explains:

⁵ Keener, [Background](#), p. 690-691.

⁶ Peter Enns, "[The Apostle Paul's clear inerrant teaching on government and why we don't need to follow it,](#)" Patheos, accessed 7.29.12.

After the death of Christ the apostles taught obedience to the powers that be, which powers, Paul declared 'are ordained of God.' See Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; see also 1 Pet. 2:13, 14. Through the medium of modern revelation, the Lord has required of His people in the present dispensation, obedience to and loyal support of the duly established and existing governments in all lands. See D&C 58:21-22; 98:4-6; and section 134 throughout. The restored Church proclaims as an essential part of its belief and practice: 'We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.'⁷

“Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2.17).

Such brief lists of these kinds of duties appear in other ancient moralists (e.g., Isocrates, Marcus Aurelius, Syriac Menander). The Old Testament also associated honoring God with honoring those in authority (Ex 22:28; 1 Kings 21:10; Prov 24:21).⁸

C. Christ's Example of Suffering and Obedience (1 Peter 2.21-25)

1 Peter 2.21-25 seem to be using much of Isaiah 53 to teach that Jesus is the servant of this Isaiah passage.

1 PETER 2 (KJV)	ISAIAH 53 (KJV)
v. 21 because Christ also suffered for us . . .	v. 4 He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows
v. 22 Who did no sin, neither was guile	v. 9 He had done no violence, neither <i>was any</i> deceit in his mouth.
v. 23 When he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not but committed <i>himself</i> to him that judgeth righteously.	v. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth
v. 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness by whose stripes ye were healed.	v. 5 He <i>was</i> wounded for our transgressions, <i>he was</i> bruised for our iniquities the chastisement of our peace <i>was</i> upon him and with his stripes we are healed.
v. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd	v. 5 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2.24)

The Tree Symbol

⁷ James E. Talmage, [Jesus the Christ](#), 564.

⁸ Keener, [Background](#), p. 691.

Based on an ancient tradition, upon his departure from the Garden of Eden, Adam retained two significant items. Firstly, the garment of light, which symbolized his priestly duties, was replaced by a garment of skins that would shield him from the adversities of the material world. Secondly, he carried a branch of the tree of life, which he utilized as his regal scepter. These two artifacts established Adam as the world's inaugural high priest and king.

Wilfred Griggs writes,

“The tree of life was an enduring symbol in the ancient world, possibly spreading through intercultural contacts. It appeared in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Greece, and elsewhere with virtually the same significant characteristics. This symbol of eternal life, however, could accurately point only to Jesus Christ, as the New Testament writers and early Christians realized.

The tree of life is mentioned specifically in the Revelation of John (Rev. 2:7; Rev. 22:2, 14), with the promise that its fruit will be given to the righteous. Other passages refer to or fulfill Old Testament symbols and prophecies. The olive tree, for example, becomes Paul's symbol of eternal life for the Saints, both Jew and Gentile. (See Rom. 11:16–27.)

Olive oil—a product of the sacred tree—was not only used in the Old Testament for the ritual anointing of priests and kings, but was also used in the New Testament for anointing the sick for God's blessing. (See Ex. 30:23–33; James 5:14–15.) The name *Christ* (Greek) or *Messiah* (Hebrew) also means “the anointed one,” and anointing for divine kingship or for God's blessing is especially significant for Jesus.”⁹

A Symbol of Kingship



The association between the Tree of Life and kingship in antiquity is evident in various ancient cultural and religious traditions. The Tree of Life is often regarded as a symbol of immortality, abundance, and wisdom, attributes that are closely associated with the authority and power of kings.

In ancient Near Eastern cultures such as Assyria and Babylon, the Tree of Life was depicted in royal art and iconography as a symbol of divine protection and kingship. In the Hebrew Bible, the Tree of Life appears as a prominent motif in the Book of Proverbs and is associated with wisdom, understanding, and righteousness.

In ancient Egyptian religion, the Tree of Life was referred to as the "persea tree," and was associated with the god Horus, who was considered the first divine king of Egypt.¹⁰ Similarly, in Hindu mythology, the Tree of Life is represented as

⁹ Griggs, C. Wilfred. "[The Tree of Life in Ancient Cultures](#)," *Ensign*, June 1988.

¹⁰ "As in other Egyptian cultic contexts, the perseas dedicated (S)paris and his cult companions were probably meant to stand on a sacred hillock and to play a role in the rituals related to Osiris' tomb." Stefano G. Caneva, *The Persea Tree from Alexander to Late Antiquity: A Contribution to the Cultural and Social History of Greco-Roman Egypt*, *Ancient Society*, Vol. 46 (206, p. 54. Caneva outlines how the cutting down of this tree was prohibited, and that "the religious initiative of individuals appears to have played an important role in the preservation of this tree" (p. 58). The author continues (p. 59), "The commitment shown by individuals associated with temples and by

the "kalpataru" or "wish-fulfilling tree," and is often depicted in the courts of kings and deities, symbolizing their power to fulfill the desires of their subjects.¹¹ In Indonesia, legend comes to us of the king of Majapait who anointed and consecrated Maharaja Sultan of Kutai as cosmic ruler at the base of "The Nagasari Tree." This tree was understood to be the center of the universe.¹² This tree was a symbol of their gods,¹³ was associated with finding the dead,¹⁴ and was the mysterious mountain that was in the center, even the holy center of heaven.¹⁵ The author concludes that this coronation ceremony, depicted the king under the tree, represented the king sitting under or leaning against the Tree of Life.¹⁶

In this way, modern readers can see some of the connections between the Tree of Life and kingship, at least as much as we have recorded information on this topic. This association between the Tree of Life and the ideal model of kings in antiquity, representing his divine authority, wisdom, and protection was a powerful tool to communicate these ideas. As such, the cosmic world tree, or Tree of Life was considered a powerful symbol of kingship, used to reinforce the legitimacy and authority of rulers in various cultural and religious contexts.

VI. Instructions for Relationships (1 Peter 3:1-12)

A. Wives and Husbands (1 Peter 3:1-7)

More Household Codes

Although Peter upholds societal norms for the purpose of the church's witness in society (see also 1 Peter 2.13-17), his sympathy here is clearly with the woman, as it was with the slaves in 2.18-25. He continues to advocate submission to authority for the sake of witness (3.1) and silencing charges that Christianity is subversive; husbands were always in the position of authority in that culture. Peter addresses wives at much greater length than husbands; if proportions of converts were comparable to Judaism, women may have largely outnumbered men in the churches.¹⁷

The JST of 1 Peter 3.1 changes the word "conversation" to "conduct," thus rendering a slightly different meaning. It seems to indicate that converts to Christianity may be won by the conduct of the married women as they uphold the household codes of the first century. Others would see their conduct and it would affect them in a positive manner, thus helping to spread the gospel message.

President Hinckley said:

institutions towards the protection of persea kept alive the Egyptian tradition of "protected" plants as sacred trees were often defined in sources from the Hellenistic period onwards."

¹¹ [Kalpavriksha, Wikipedia](#), accessed 3.15.23.

¹² "The Nagasari-tree stands in the centre of the Universe. This centre' is known in Javano-Balinese religion to belong to Siwa, and to his spouse Urna, and 'every kind of flowers' and 'all colours' mean that they are the gods of totality, containing all other gods, colours etc. in themselves. 'Bathing' in this water imparts the highest form of purification." Jacoba Hooykaas, Upon A White Stone Under a Nagasari Tree," *Bijdragen tot de Tall-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, Deel 113, 4de Afl. 1957, p. 326.

¹³ Hooykaas, p. 328.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

¹⁷ Keener, [Background](#), p. 692.

We cannot hope to influence others in the direction of virtue unless we live lives of virtue. The example of our living will carry a greater influence than will all the preaching in which we might indulge. We cannot expect to lift others unless we stand on higher ground ourselves.¹⁸

3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. (1 Peter 3.3-4)

Hair was braided in elaborate manners, and well-to-do women strove to keep up with the latest expensive fashions. The gaudy adornments of women of wealth, meant to draw attention to themselves, were repeatedly condemned in ancient literature and speeches, and Peter's hearers would assume that his point was meant in the same way. Ancients considered a meek and quiet spirit a prime virtue for women, and many moralists advised this attitude instead of dressing in the latest fashions to attract men's attention, a vice commonly attributed to aristocratic women but imitated by others who could afford to do so.¹⁹

Οἱ ἄνδρες ὁμοίως συνοικοῦντες κατὰ γνώσιν ὡς ἄσθενεστέρῳ σκεύει τῷ γυναικείῳ ἀπονέμοντες τιμὴν ὡς καὶ συγκληρονόμοι χάριτος ζωῆς εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκκόπτεσθαι τὰς προσευχὰς ὑμῶν (1 Peter 3.7 Greek text).

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving **honour** unto the wife, as unto the **weaker** vessel, and as being **heirs together** of the grace of life; that your **prayers** be not hindered. (1 Peter 3.7, KJV)

Alternate Translation: In the same way brethren, living with *your families* according to this knowledge, *giving honor* to your wife, as she is of a **more delicate** body, even as you are **fellow heirs together** into the Grace of Life, your **prayers** will not be cut down (1 Peter 3.7, my translation).

In this regard, Peter is calling out husbands to be mindful of their duties of their wives, to preserve and protect them, to honor and cherish them, as they are the very fountains of the lives of their children and their future families. This verse clearly declares women equal to men before God, as both women and men are συγκληρονόμος (*sygklēronomos*) fellow heirs or joint heirs together in their following God and receiving eternal life. A husband who failed to give honor to his wife was in spiritual peril and if he did not repent, his prayers could be jeopardized, as 1 Peter 3.12 seems to indicate.

B. Living in Harmony and Blessing (1 Peter 3:8-12)

VII. Suffering for Righteousness (1 Peter 3:13-22)

A. Prepared to Defend Hope and Faith (1 Peter 3:13-17)

κρεῖττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιῶντας εἰ θέλει τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ πάσχειν ἢ κακοποιῶντας.

For *it is better*, if the will of God be so, that ye **suffer** for well doing, than for evil doing.

Ancient writers sometimes communicated points through special literary forms; one of these is called *chiasmus, an inverted parallel structure, which seems to occur here:

¹⁸ *Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, Deseret Book, 1997], 182.

¹⁹ Keener, *Background*, p. 692.

- A Your slanderers will be ashamed (3:16)
- B Suffer though innocent, in God's will (3:17)
- C For Christ suffered for the unjust (3:18)
- D He triumphed over hostile spirits (3:19)
- E Noah was saved through water (3:20)
- E' You are saved through water (3:21)
- D' Christ triumphed over hostile spirits (3:22)
- C' For Christ suffered (4:1a)
- B' Suffer in God's will (4:1b-2)
- A' Your slanderers will be ashamed (4:3-5)²⁰

1 Peter 3.17 encourages believers to embrace the challenges that may arise from doing good, remain steadfast in their moral convictions, and trust in God's guidance and ultimate purpose. It provides a framework for understanding the relationship between virtuous actions and the potential hardships that may accompany them.

As Elder Neal A. Maxwell once stated, "Chastisement... is usually a major challenge for our egos." The concept of justice compels us to believe that suffering should not be our consequence for doing good. Although God does not punish us for virtuous actions, the world may impose challenges. It becomes especially arduous when our genuine intentions are doubted, affecting our sense of moral purity. Elder Maxwell reminds us, "enduring the indignity of being wronged for being right is yet another irony. Being misunderstood even when engaged in well-doing is part of it, too..." (*We Will Prove Them Herewith*, 117-118.)

Peter's teachings illustrate the plight of individuals like the good Samaritan, who, after assisting someone in trouble, is later accused of committing a crime. The good Samaritan then in doing good becomes a victim as they face false accusations.²¹ We read stories of things like the doctor, sued despite saving a patient's life; and the missionary, scorned while sharing the gospel of Christ. These ironies are undoubtedly challenging to bear. Nevertheless, Peter emphasizes that enduring such hardships yields a greater reward. It's noteworthy that the Lord, too, understands the experience of suffering for doing good. Unlike suffering for personal errors, the Master's affliction stemmed from bearing the consequences of others' mistakes, as he never committed a sin, but rather suffered for our sins, "The just for the unjust" (1 Peter 3.18).

²⁰ Keener, *Background*, p. 694.

²¹ A good Samaritan who helped a struggling teen fix her car was jailed after she accused him of sexual assault. See: [News.com](https://www.news.com) May 16, 2019. Accessed 8.1.2023.

B. Christ's Suffering and Triumph (1 Peter 3:18-22)

ἐν ᾧ καὶ τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασιν πορευθεὶς ἐκήρυξεν

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3.19).

In the exegesis of this scriptural passage, it is evident that no discourse could rival the profundity of Doctrine and Covenants Section 138. This section encapsulates a magnificent vision that provides a comprehensive elucidation of the said scripture. The concept of having more scriptural insights on scriptures themselves, as well as additional revelations on the nature of revelation, is indeed enticing and would greatly enrich our understanding.

President Joseph F. Smith's contemplation about the Savior's expeditious work is addressed in Doctrine and Covenants 138.28. The revelation clarifies that the Lord, rather than personally preaching to the spirits in prison, strategically organized His forces and appointed messengers (D&C 138.30). This not only resolves the logistical issue but also imparts a crucial principle. The spirits in prison were deemed unworthy of a direct visitation by the Lord, akin to how the resurrected Savior did not appear to the wicked but exclusively manifested Himself to righteous Jewish saints. This pattern aligns with the occurrence among the wicked Nephites, who were destroyed before the Savior could openly minister to them.

Hence, consistency dictates that after accomplishing the task assigned by the Father, the Master would not appear directly to the wicked. Just as Gentiles were to be converted through missionary efforts, the residents of spirit prison received their ministrations in a similar manner. The Savior, as recorded in 3 Nephi 15.23, stated that the Gentiles would not hear His voice in person but rather through the Holy Ghost. In analogous fashion, the spirits in prison were not to hear His voice directly but rather experience His manifestation through the Holy Ghost. Due to their rebellion and transgression, the Savior could not personally attend to them (D&C 138.37).

Thus, a careful examination of Peter's precise words becomes essential. He indicated that Christ was put to death in the flesh but was made alive by the Spirit, through which He preached to the spirits in prison. This ministry was not in person but rather carried out through missionaries who were endowed with the power and authority to disseminate the light of the gospel to those in darkness (D&C 138.30).

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Peter 3.20)

In ancient Judaism, the flood served as a symbolic model for future judgments, as seen in 2 Peter 3:6-7. The focus on the salvation of only a "few" provided encouragement to Christian readers, who were facing persecution as a minority group. The mention of God's "patience" in 2 Peter 3:9 echoes the concept found in Genesis 6:3 and is associated with the impending final judgment.

ὃς ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ πορευθεὶς εἰς οὐρανὸν ὑποταγέντων αὐτῷ ἀγγέλων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν καὶ δυνάμεων.

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him (1 Peter 3.22).

In the first few centuries of Christianity and during the Second temple period, it was widely accepted among Jewish people that demonic and/or angelic forces exerted influence behind the political structures of the world. These forces were believed to guide and direct earthly rulers and populations (as can be seen in Ephesians 1.21). This understanding can be traced in ancient texts such as the Septuagint version of Deuteronomy 32:8, Jubilees 15:31-32²², 35:17, Dead Sea Scrolls 1QM 15.13-14, *1 Enoch* 61:10, and particularly evident in Daniel 10:13, 20. The hierarchical organization of angelic ranks is further elaborated in *1 Enoch* 69:3.²³ The term "authorities and powers" (1 Peter 3.22) referred to angelic rulers presiding over various nations, a topic frequently discussed in Jewish texts. Consequently, even the malevolent forces behind the rulers who persecuted Christians had been brought under control, leaving no doubt about the ultimate triumph.

VIII. Living for God's Will (1 Peter 4:1-11)

A. Emulating Christ's Suffering in the Flesh (1 Peter 4:1-6)

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (1 Peter 4.6)

This verse can be read as stressing the idea that the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached to deceased individuals in the afterlife, such as the souls in Hades or Sheol. According to this understanding of the text, the gospel's message extends beyond the boundaries of earthly life, allowing the opportunity for repentance and acceptance of Christ even after death (see also John 5.25-29 where Jesus discusses the dead hearing his voice).

The latter part of the verse emphasizes that although these individuals faced judgment in the flesh, just like all human beings, they are now living in the spirit as God does. This points to the transformative and redemptive power of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus, believers are not only granted forgiveness and reconciliation with God but also receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to live in accordance with God's ways.

Overall, 1 Peter 4.6 underscores the universal scope of the gospel's message, extending even to those who have passed away, something Latter-day Saint doctrine espouses. It emphasizes the hope of salvation and spiritual life in Christ, regardless of one's physical circumstances or the point in time when

²² [Jubilees 15.31-32](#) reads: And He sanctified it, and gathered it from amongst all the children of men; for there are many nations and many peoples, and all are His, and over all hath **He placed spirits in authority to lead them astray from Him. But over Israel He did not appoint any angel or spirit, for He alone is their ruler, and He will preserve them** and require them at the hand of His angels and His spirits, and at the hand of all His powers in order that He may preserve them and bless them, and that they may be His and He may be theirs from henceforth for ever (emphasis added).

²³ [1 Enoch 69.1-3](#) reads: 1. And after this judgment I will terrify them, and make them tremble, for they have shown this to those who dwell upon the dry ground." 2. And behold, the names of those Angels: – The first of them is Semyaza, and the second Artaqifa, and the third Armen, and the fourth Kokabiel, and the fifth Turiel, and the sixth Ramiel, and the seventh Daniel, and the eighth Nuqael, and the ninth Baraqiel, and the tenth Azazel, and the eleventh Armaros, the twelfth Batriel, the thirteenth Basasael, the fourteenth Ananel, the fifteenth Turiel, the sixteenth Samsiel, the seventeenth Yetarel, the eighteenth Tumiel, the nineteenth Turiel, the twentieth Rumiel, the twenty-first Azazel. 3. And these are the chiefs of their Angels, and the names of the leaders of hundreds, and their leaders of fifties, and their leaders of tens.

the gospel is received (see also D&C 138). This verse encourages believers to remain steadfast in their faith, trusting in God's transformative work and ultimate judgment, and living in the Spirit as God intends. Spencer W. Kimball put it this way:

[The Savior] provided the opportunity whereby they might repent of their sins, change their attitudes and their lives, and live according to God in the spirit. We do not know how many millions of spirits are involved. We know that many have passed away in wars, pestilence, and in various accidents. We know that the spirit world is filled with the spirits of men who are waiting for you and me to get busy-waiting as the signers of the Declaration of Independence waited. "Why," they asked President Wilford Woodruff, "why do you keep us waiting?" That question continues to be asked of us also, by our own people.

We wonder about our progenitors-grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, etc. What do they think of you and me? We are their offspring. We have the responsibility to do their temple work, and the beautiful temples of the Lord stand day after day, yet we do not fill them always. We have a grave responsibility that we cannot avoid, and may stand in jeopardy if we fail to do this important work.

I hope our Saints will understand the glorious reality of it all: that as the work in our temples is done in this world, it helps to prepare us for another and better world.²⁴

Elder Neal A. Maxwell related this thought regarding the preaching of the gospel to those that have departed and are in the Spirit World:

On the other side of the veil, there are perhaps seventy billion people. They need the same gospel, and releases occur here to aid the Lord's work there. Each release of a righteous individual from this life is also a call to new labors. Those who have true hope understand this. Therefore, though we miss the departed righteous so much here, hundreds may feel their touch there. One day, those hundreds will thank the bereaved for gracefully forgoing the extended association with choice individuals here, in order that they could help hundreds there. In God's ecology, talent and love are never wasted. The hopeful understand this, too.²⁵

B. Stewards of God's Grace and Gifts (1 Peter 4:7-11)

IX. Enduring Trials with Faith (1 Peter 4:12-19)

A. Rejoicing in Sharing Christ's Sufferings (1 Peter 4:12-14)

B. Entrusting Souls to a Faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:15-19)

And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 Peter 4.18)

In this verse, the apostle Peter addresses the difficulties and trials that even righteous and faithful believers may face in their Christian journey. The phrase "hard for the righteous to be saved" implies that living a life devoted to Christ and adhering to God's commands can be demanding and fraught with challenges, and perhaps that even those who see themselves as Christian will not all be saved. It also

²⁴ President Spencer W. Kimball, "[The Things of Eternity Stand We in Jeopardy?](#)" *Ensign*, Jan. 1977.

²⁵ Neal A. Maxwell, [Notwithstanding My Weakness](#), Deseret Book, 1981, 55.

stresses the idea that the righteous may encounter persecution, trials, and tribulations as they strive to remain faithful to their beliefs and moral principles.

Through this statement, Peter acknowledges the reality of suffering and struggles that Christians may experience, highlighting the cost of discipleship and the sacrifices that may be required in following Jesus. It serves as a reminder that living a righteous and godly life in a fallen world is not always easy, and believers may face hardships and opposition along the way.

Additionally, the 1 Peter 4.18 draws a sharp contrast between the fate of the righteous and the ungodly. While the righteous may face challenges, Peter emphasizes that their ultimate destiny is one of salvation. On the other hand, the ungodly and sinners who reject God's ways and refuse to repent are depicted as facing a far more severe fate. Joseph Smith put it this way:

I explained concerning the coming of the Son of Man; also that ***it is a false idea that the Saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer***; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and "the righteous shall hardly escape;" still many of the Saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith; yet many of the righteous shall fall a prey to disease, to pestilence, etc., by reason of the weakness of the flesh, and yet be saved in the Kingdom of God. So that it is an unhallowed principle to say that such and such have transgressed because they have been preyed upon by disease or death, for all flesh is subject to death; and the Savior has said, "Judge not, lest ye be judged."²⁶

X. Encouragement to Elders and Believers (1 Peter 5:1-11)

A. Exhortation to Shepherds and Leaders (1 Peter 5:1-4)

B. Humility and Casting Cares on God (1 Peter 5:5-7)

C. God's Eternal Glory and Power (1 Peter 5:8-11)

XI. Final Greetings and Benediction (1 Peter 5:12-14)

A. Closing Remarks and Commendations (1 Peter 5.12-14)

2 Peter

Authorship and Date

Biblical scholar Craig S. Keener explains:

Regarding authorship, ***2 Peter is one of the most disputed letters in the New Testament***. A number of scholars argue that the style differs so much from 1 Peter that the same person could not have written both unless he were purposely trying to alter his style. But some scholars respond that Peter could have given literary freedoms to his amanuenses, using a different scribe (1 Pet 5:13) for each, with the second being more accustomed to bombastic Asiatic rhetorical style. (Although many second-rate rhetoricians preferred flowery Asianism, Atticist style became predominant and ultimately flourished by the early second century. This style

²⁶ [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*](#), Deseret Book, 1976, p. 162, emphasis added.

might provide a clue to the destination or, more likely, the date [before the second century], although it might reveal only the rhetorical training of the author or scribe. Quintilian noted that a third style, the Rhodian, less redundant than the Asiatic school but less concise than the Atticist, was sometimes also used.)

The most important argument against Petrine authorship is the letter's clear dependence on Jude, yet defenders of Petrine authorship counter that Peter could have incorporated much of Jude's letter, instructed a scribe to do so or (much less likely) even used Jude as his scribe. (That Jude used 2 Peter is improbable, based on simplifications of imagery, expansions of allusions, etc.) ***Others argue that a later writer, maybe a close associate of Peter, wove together Petrine material with material from Jude.***

The attestation for 2 Peter is weaker than that for most other New Testament books but stronger than that of early Christian books that did not become part of the New Testament, especially those claiming to be Petrine. The early church did debate its genuineness, although its existence is attested early. But pseudepigraphic documents were generally written in the name of a hero of the distant past; although a second-century date for the letter is possible, no internal evidence necessarily precludes a first-century date. Second-century Gnosticism is probably not in view, and the end's delay was an issue perhaps as early as the first New Testament document (1 Thessalonians).²⁷

Who was this text written against?

This letter addresses a suggested heresy, possibly second-century Gnosticism or a first-century proto-Gnosticism. The term "knowledge," a favorite focus of Gnostics, appears seven times in the letter, though not exclusively associated with them. Gnostics rejected the future coming of Christ and downplayed the significance of bodily sins.²⁸ However, Gnosticism didn't originate these ideas; they were built upon earlier Greek, Jewish, and Christian concepts present in the first century. The opponents in question are likely Diaspora Jews, heavily influenced by Greek thought, possibly even more so than Philo.²⁹ Parallels

²⁷ Keener, [Background](#), p. 698, emphasis added.

²⁸ Within the vast array of Gnostic texts, certain sects and writings exhibit elements of rejecting the future coming of Jesus, particularly in the sense of a bodily, physical return. These Gnostic teachings are rooted in their distinct cosmology and emphasis on spiritual knowledge. Notable examples include the *Gospel of Thomas*, which centers on Jesus' sayings and focuses on inner spiritual illumination rather than a future event. *The Gospel of Philip* similarly emphasizes gnosis for spiritual salvation and highlights the union of souls, while the significance of a future return is minimized. Some Gnostic writings discuss archons, lower divine beings ruling the world, implying a lack of expectation for Jesus' future overthrow of these entities. Furthermore, certain branches of Valentinian Gnosticism, like the followers of Valentinus, emphasize spiritual awakening through gnosis and do not prioritize the traditional notion of Jesus' future return. When it comes to how they viewed bodily sins, many of the Gnostics held to a different position than that of orthodox Christianity. In Gnostic texts, the downplaying of the significance of bodily sins can be found in certain writings that emphasize the dualistic nature of their cosmology. According to Gnostic beliefs, the material world, including the physical body, is considered inherently flawed or corrupt, while the spiritual realm is seen as the realm of purity and salvation. Consequently, bodily sins and actions within the material realm are often considered of lesser importance compared to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge (gnosis) and liberation from the material constraints. See: [Gnosticism, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#).

²⁹ Philo, also known as Philo of Alexandria, was a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher and theologian who lived during the first half of the 1st century CE. He was born in Alexandria, a prominent city in Egypt known for its cultural and intellectual diversity. Philo belonged to a wealthy and influential Jewish family and was deeply influenced by both

with Diaspora Jewish literature and works from the so-called Pseudepigrapha indicate that the audience possessed a robust background in Jewish literature.

Outline

I. Introduction (2 Peter 1:1-2)

- A. Greeting from Peter (1:1)
- B. Recipients of the letter (1:1-2)

II. Exhortation to Grow in Christian Virtues (2 Peter 1:3-11)

- A. God's Divine Power and Promises (1:3-4)
- B. Call to Add Virtues to One's Faith (1:5-7)
- C. The Fruitful and Effective Christian Life (1:8-11)

III. Peter's Reminder of His Apostolic Witness (2 Peter 1:12-21)

- A. Peter's Intention to Continually Remind the Readers (1:12-15)
- B. The Transfiguration as a Confirmation of Christ's Majesty (1:16-18)
- C. The Reliability of Prophecy (1:19-21)

IV. Warning Against False Teachers (2 Peter 2)

- A. The Rise of False Prophets and Teachers (2:1-3)
- B. God's Judgment on the Unrighteous and Fallen Angels (2:4-9)

In 2 Peter 2:4-9, the apostle addresses the concept of fallen angels and their subsequent judgment. Peter draws attention to the historical reality of the angels who sinned against God and were subsequently cast down to Tartarus, a place of darkness and confinement. This passage reflects Peter's understanding of divine judgment and accountability, illustrating that even celestial beings are not exempt from facing consequences for their transgressions. Peter's reference in 2.4 the fallen angels brings to mind the Enoch texts that both Peter and Jude are quoting from, however, the exact identity and nature of these fallen angels are not explicitly stated in this particular passage. However, based on

Jewish traditions and Hellenistic philosophy. Philo's works reflect his attempt to synthesize Jewish religious beliefs with Greek philosophical ideas, particularly those of Platonism and Stoicism. He sought to bridge the gap between the revealed truths of Judaism and the philosophical concepts of the Greco-Roman world. His writings primarily focus on interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures, exploring their allegorical and symbolic meanings, and using philosophical concepts to explain their deeper significance. One of Philo's significant contributions was the development of the concept of the Logos (Word), which he considered an intermediary force between the transcendent God of Judaism and the material world. His Logos concept was highly influential and had an impact on later Christian theology, particularly in the writings of the Gospel of John, where the Logos is identified with Jesus Christ. Philo's works have provided valuable insights into the cultural and intellectual climate of the Hellenistic Jewish community in Alexandria. His writings remain relevant to scholars and theologians interested in the intersection of Judaism and Hellenistic philosophy during the early centuries of the Common Era. See: Philo of Alexandria, [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), accessed 8.3.23.

the context and other biblical references, it is commonly understood to be a reference to a group of angels who rebelled against God and were consequently punished (see [1 Enoch 6](#)).

Latter-day Saints, as well as many biblical scholars and theologians outside of our faith tradition interpret these fallen angels as the angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God before the creation of the world (see "[War in Heaven](#)"). According to this view, Satan, who was once a high-ranking angel named Lucifer, led a rebellion in heaven, and a significant number of angels sided with him in opposition to God. As a consequence of their rebellion, they were cast down from their heavenly positions and are now referred to as fallen angels or demons.

Other interpretations consider the fallen angels to be a group of angels who committed various sins, including sexual immorality, as mentioned in Jude 1:6. These angels left their rightful place and engaged in sinful behavior, leading to their judgment and confinement in Tartarus.

By using this example, Peter emphasizes the seriousness of false teachings and immoral conduct. He likens false teachers and ungodly individuals to these fallen angels, suggesting that they, too, will face divine judgment for their deceptive practices and sinful behavior. The reference to Noah's flood and the rescue of the righteous emphasizes the assurance of God's deliverance for the righteous amidst judgment, while the destruction of the ungodly serves as a warning to those who persist in wickedness.

Peter's message resonates with the early Christian community, which faced various challenges and threats from false teachers and immoral influences. The passage serves as a call to remain faithful to the true teachings of Christ and to live a life of righteousness and holiness. It underscores the need for discernment and moral discernment in navigating the complexities of a world where false teachings and immoral behaviors abound.

C. Examples of Past Judgment: Noah and Lot (2:5-8)

D. The Character and Deeds of False Teachers (2:10-22)

Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption (2 Peter 2.11-12).

This is a challenging verse to modern readers! I appreciate this interpretation of these words:

The contemptuous, audacious arrogance of the false teachers leads Peter to dehumanize them. They are "like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed. They slander what they do not understand, and when those creatures are destroyed, they also will be destroyed, suffering the penalty for doing wrong" (vv. 12-13a). The "rampage of rhetoric" reaches a nadir in these verses. Even though Peter's audience may have been accustomed to such vitriol, twenty-first-century readers should flinch at the notion that false teachers were "born to be caught and killed." Such rhetoric in our day has too often given permission to zealots to kill literally. We concede the point of Peter's context, but we cannot affirm any application of his hot opinion. False teachers, irrational or not, driven by instinct or not, still keep their humanness. Rebuke them, yes. Argue the errors of their thinking and lifestyles, yes. Pave the way for their slaughter, no.

In fairness to Peter, he is not suggesting that his readers take up cudgels against the false teachers. In 2 Peter 2.12 Peter lumps the beastly false teachers with the literal beasts who will be destroyed. Perhaps here is an echo of 2 Peter 2.5, the judgment of the “ancient world” in the time of Noah. The flood led to the destruction of beasts and humans and, for Peter, served as evidence of the judgment that will come at the Parousia (Second Coming). Peter is willing to wait for God’s judgment upon the world as a final purification that was prefigured in the flood; in that final judgment the beastly false teachers, too, will perish. The end of 2 Peter 2.12 and the beginning of 2 Peter 2.13, “they also will be destroyed, suffering the penalty for doing wrong,” does not capture the apparent word play in the original (ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν καταφθαρῆσονται κομιούμενοι μισθὸν ἀδικίας)... An alternate translation comes closer: “They shall be destroyed with the same destruction they have brought about.”³⁰

Craig Keener explains this verse thus:

A wide variety of Jewish texts mention those who reviled the stars of heaven or cursed (such as Satan or demons – see: Dead Sea Scrolls 1QM 13.1-4; 4Q280 f2.2; 4Q286 f7ii.2-7; Babylonian Talmud *Menahot* 62a; cf. Sirach 21:27 lxx; *Life of Adam and Eve* 39:1). Peter’s opponents have presumably adopted this practice, perhaps as a form of “spiritual warfare.” (By contrast, the Sodomites [2:6] tried to molest angels but were unaware that they were angels.) Although Christians had to be concerned for their public witness—charges of subversion in the Roman Empire led to severe persecution and repression—these false teachers apparently reviled earthly authorities and the angelic authorities behind them.³¹

In 2 Peter 2.10-22, the author is railing against false teachers and false prophets who have infiltrated the Christian community and are promoting destructive heresies. These enemies are depicted as immoral and deceptive individuals who exploit the believers' vulnerabilities for personal gain. The passage highlights their corrupt nature, emphasizing their false teachings and immoral behaviors, such as indulging in sensuality, despising authority, and leading others astray. 2 Peter condemns these false teachers for their arrogance and blasphemous words against celestial beings, likely referring to their audacious claims and disrespect towards angelic powers. They are also accused of enticing believers with empty promises and engaging in practices that lead to spiritual destruction.

The enemies are likened to irrational animals, driven by instinct, rather than guided by reason or moral principles. The author uses vivid imagery to emphasize their perilous fate and warns that they will face judgment and punishment for their deceitful actions. Overall, the author of 2 Peter 2.10-22 is railing against false teachers and prophets who threaten the integrity and faithfulness of the Christian community, portraying them as dangerous adversaries who must be exposed and avoided.

The specific identity of the false teachers mentioned in 2 Peter 2.10-22 is not explicitly stated in the text. The author of 2 Peter ***does not provide names or specific details about these individuals or groups.*** As a result, scholars and interpreters have debated the exact historical context and identity of these false teachers.

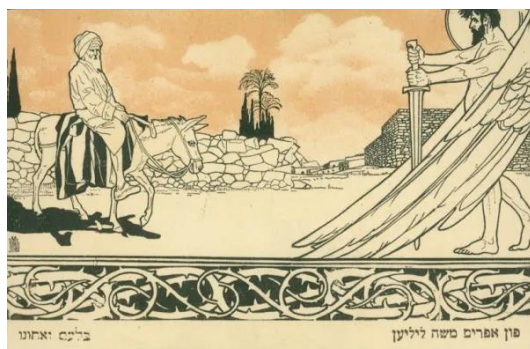
³⁰ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, Watson E. Mills, [1 & 2 Peter, Jude](#), Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2010, p. 337-338.

³¹ Keener, [Background](#), p. 702.

Based on the content of the passage, some scholars speculate that these false teachers could have been influenced by various heretical movements or sects that were emerging within early Christianity. These movements often combined Christian beliefs with other philosophical or religious ideas, leading to the promotion of destructive teachings that deviated from orthodox Christianity.

The false teachers mentioned in 2 Peter 2.10-22 appear to share similarities with certain heretical groups known as Gnostics. Gnostic sects were known for their dualistic worldview, which saw the material world as evil and the spiritual realm as pure and divine. Some Gnostic beliefs downplayed the significance of bodily sins and advocated for esoteric spiritual knowledge (gnosis) as the key to salvation.

Balaam in the text (2 Peter 2.15-16)



Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. (2 Peter 2.15-16)

Why is Balaam being invoked here? According to some Jewish traditions and the one interpretation of the Old Testament, Balaam is depicted as an ignoble figure. Driven by greed, in one version of the text, he led the Israelites

into immoral activities with the Midianites, which incurred God's wrath and led to his own demise (Numbers 31.8, 16; Joshua 13.22). Although Jewish literature considered him the foremost prophet and at times a philosopher among pagans, his role in Israel's sexual transgressions remained unchanged. His sinister attempt to lead Israel into sin was deemed even more grievous than any military attack from other nations, as it provoked divine judgment. The contrast between "the way of Balaam" and the "right way" embodies the prevalent ancient concept of two paths – one leading the righteous or wise to life and the other leading the foolish to destruction.

But is this really the case?

Numbers 31:16 (a [priestly text](#)) is the **only verse** in the Old Testament that attributes the [apostasy of Baal Peor](#) to Balaam's doing. Deuteronomy 23.4-5 says that God turned Balaam's "curse into a blessing" even though in the actual account of Balaam as recorded in Numbers 22-24 we see that Balaam did the opposite! **He actually blessed Israel!** The text in Numbers 31.16 paints Balaam as a bad guy, but for a different reason. This account blames the Midianites for Israelite apostasy in Number 25.16-18, but also pins the blame on Balaam, even though in Numbers chapters 22-24 he is a completely faithful prophet, totally honest and upright before God (which is especially noticeable since he is *not* of Israel). This incident, sometimes referred to as the "[Peor incident](#)" on account of its location, has to do with Israel's apostasy from their God Yahweh, and the evil influence of the Moabite women and culture on Israel.

I have always struggled with this story. On one hand, Balaam is an honorable representative of God, saying, "Though Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, big or little, contrary to the command of the Lord my God. (Numbers 22.19 JSP version) Later, God tells Balaam to go with Balak and his men in Number 22.20, only to have a contradictory experience in Numbers 22.21-35 where a talking donkey resists Balaam and he sees the angel of the Lord. The author, it seems,

is suggesting that Balaam is heading off to curse Israel as per Balak's request. I don't interpret the text this way, as Numbers 22-24 illustrate that in every respect Balaam is only speaking what the Lord would have him speak.

For example we read in Numbers 23.8, "How can I damn whom God has not damned, How doom when the Lord has not doomed?" (JPS version)

Or later, "I can only repeat faithfully what the Lord puts in my mouth." (Numbers 23.12, JPS version)

But then we get back to Numbers 31.16, which seems to blame Balaam for something that he did not do in the account of his life in Numbers 22-24. It reads, "Yet they are the very ones who, **at the bidding of Balaam**, induced the Israelites to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so that the Lord's community was struck by the plague." (JPS version, *emphasis added*) Balaam seems to be the bad guy in John's recollection as well when we read in Revelation 2.14, "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

These verses (Numbers 31.16 and Revelation 2.14) seem to completely contradict what we read in Numbers 22-24! It seems as if the priestly writer, who many scholars say wrote much later than J or E (E being the supposed author of the main account of Balaam in Numbers 22-24) is creating a contradictory tradition about Balaam which is not represented anywhere else in the Old Testament. We also have a negative view of Balaam in Deuteronomy 23:4-5, where the Lord "turned the curse into a blessing". This account was written by the [Deuteronomist](#), much later than the E version of Balaam than what we have in Numbers 22-24.³²

From a theological perspective, the accounts in Numbers 22-24 seem to lack divine knowledge of the impending apostasy depicted in Numbers 25.³³ Friedman assigns Numbers 22-24 to E, but also admits

³² David Bokovoy, [Authoring the Old Testament](#), p. 78. He writes, "It appears that E (or possibly J) was the first documentary source. P was written thereafter, which makes sense in light of the way P reacted to J's stories about creation and the flood. The Hebrew in D is later than that of P, which connects with D's rejection of the earlier Priestly concept of God literally dwelling in his temple." See also Richard Friedman, [The Bible with Sources Revealed](#), p. 7-8. Commenting on the order of the authors of the Pentateuch, he says, "The Hebrew of J and E comes from the earliest stage of biblical Hebrew. The Hebrew of P comes from a later stage of the language. The Hebrew from the Deuteronomistic texts comes from a still later stage of the language... The chronology of the language of the sources is confirmed by Hebrew texts outside the Bible. The characteristics of Classical Biblical Hebrew are confirmed through comparison with inscriptions that have been discovered through archaeology, which come from the period before the Babylonian exile (587 BCE). The characteristics of Late Biblical Hebrew are confirmed through comparison with the Hebrew of later sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Despite the power of this evidence, it is practically never mentioned by those who oppose the hypothesis (meaning, the Documentary Hypothesis)" To me, many of the contradictions make sense in light of this. We have an early version of Balaam that portrays him as faithful to God, only to have other, later texts state that he was evil, in spite of the fact that the only actual account of his life, the E account, written earliest, shows us otherwise. There must have been a reason for the later authors to do this!

³³ Friedman assigns Numbers 25.1-5 to J, with Numbers 25.6-19 belonging to P. As soon as we get to Numbers 25.6, we read the polemic against the Midianites. Many scholars have noted that since Moses married a Midianite, P is issuing an attack against Moses and the Mushite priesthood in their defense of the Aaronids claim to authority.

that this is a difficult assessment.³⁴ Similarly, Numbers 25 does not show any awareness of the Balaam incident or the fact that the territory involved was Amorite, not Moabite, as stated in the earlier J tradition. This suggests that the present story, like the Balaam pericope (the story in Numbers 22-24), originated from a different textual tradition and was later placed in its current position by subsequent editors.

Furthermore, it appears that there are two distinct traditions within this narrative. The earlier version portrays Moabites, particularly Moabite women, leading the Israelites into the worship of Baal, while the later version (from P) introduces the Midianites into the mix (see Numbers 25.6-19).

For instance, Numbers 25.1-5 (from J) describes the Baal Peor incident involving only Israelites and Moabites. However, Numbers 25.16-17 and 31.15-16 (both from P) attribute the apostasy solely to the Midianites. Additionally, in connection with the Moabite women (Numbers 25.1-5, from J), the Israelites who are associated with Baal Peor are "impaled to Yahweh" facing the sun. Yet, in relation to the Midianite storyline, Yahweh sends a plague (Numbers 25.8-9, 18, from P). Moreover, the pretext for exterminating all Midianites, except for the young female virgins, is their role in leading Israel into apostasy (Numbers 31.1-20, from P), whereas nothing is mentioned about the Moabites (different textual tradition!)

Biblical scholars have long recognized, based on thematic and linguistic analysis, that the story beginning at Numbers 25.6 and all of chapter 31 belong to the Priestly source.³⁵ It is believed that the Aaronid priests themselves added the Midianites into this story to serve their own ideological agenda (that of denigrating Moses and the Mushite claims to priesthood authority). This addition aligns with other instances of the Priestly reworking of earlier JE material, where the Midianites are denigrated or Moses' and Yahweh's association with Midian is omitted.³⁶

The question I have is, why? And why all this hatred towards Balaam from non-JE material? Why would a later author take a text that was positive about Balaam and rewrite it so as to present him in a negative light? And why is this so fragmentary? (Numbers 22 completely reverses at about verse 20!) Perhaps it has something to do with Balaam not being of the House of Israel. Or it could be related to the area in which he lived. We now know, through the discovery of the "[Balaam inscriptions](#)" from Deir 'Alla, a Transjordanian site, that Balaam was a popular literary figure in other Transjordanian extra-biblical traditions that were active during the 9th to 8th centuries BCE.³⁷ The traditions regarding Balaam probably come from this period. It is possible that the later versions that portrayed Balaam as a bad guy may have to do with the historical situations that these scribes were facing at the time that they wrote their versions of the Exodus narrative. Perhaps these negative accounts of him are a polemic against outside influences that were known to corrupt the true worship of God in the days that these later authors revised their stories. There is certainly much more to this story than we now have in our Bible!

³⁴ Richard Elliott Friedman, [The Bible with Sources Revealed](#), p. 280. He writes, "The Balaam episode is perhaps the hardest section in the Torah in which to delineate sources. Most scholars regard this three-chapter story as a composite."

³⁵ See Friedman, [The Bible with Sources Revealed](#), HarperOne, 2005, pages 287-300.

³⁶ Mike Day, [Is Balaam a good guy or a bad guy?](#), July 20, 2017.

³⁷ Hoftuzer, The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden 21-24 August 1989 (Ancient Near East).

Is 2 Peter an Anti-Gnostic Reading?

We see hints of this here: εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τούτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἠττῶνται γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ἔσχατα χεῖρονα τῶν πρώτων

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the **knowledge** of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (2 Peter 2.20)

2 Peter may be seen as having an anti-gnostic flavor. Variations of the Greek word γνῶσις (*gnosis*) or related terms do appear in 2 Peter. Here are some instances:

2 Peter 1.2 - ἐπίγνωσιν (*epignōsin*) is used, which can be translated as "knowledge" or "full knowledge." It reads, "May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."

2 Peter 1.3 - ἐπιγνώσεως (*epignōseōs*) is used, which is a genitive form of ἐπίγνωσις (*gnosis*). It reads, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence."

2 Peter 1.5 - γνῶσιν (*gnōsin*) is used. It reads, "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge."

2 Peter 1.6 - γνῶσιν (*gnōsin*) is used again. The author writes, "And knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness."

2 Peter 2.20 - ἐπιγνώσεως (*epignōseōs*) is used, similar to the one in 2 Peter 1:3. "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."

These variations of the word γνῶσις (*gnosis*) and its related forms in 2 Peter highlight the significance of knowledge and understanding in the context of Christian faith and the dangers of falling away from it. In 2 Peter, the strategic use of the term "gnosis" and its related variations can be seen as a subtle but intentional polemic against the emerging Gnostic views prevalent during the first and second centuries. Peter's careful choice of words, such as ἐπίγνωσιν (*epignōsin*) and γνῶσιν (*gnōsin*), emphasizes the importance of true knowledge rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By employing these terms, Peter asserts that genuine knowledge is not hidden within esoteric mysteries or secret wisdom, as espoused by the Gnostic sects, but is rather attainable through faith in Christ and obedience to the apostolic teachings. In doing so, **Peter seeks to counter the Gnostic emphasis on secret revelations and challenge their subversive interpretations of Christianity.** Through this polemic approach, Peter encourages his readers to anchor themselves in the orthodox teachings of the apostles and remain vigilant against the allure of Gnostic ideologies that threatened to distort the core tenets of the Christian faith.

V. The Day of the Lord and God's Patience (2 Peter 3:1-10)

A. Peter's Second Letter as a Reminder (3:1-2)

B. The Scoffers and Their Doubts (3:3-7)

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Peter 3.3-4)

Some philosophers charged that Epicureans, who denied future judgment, lacked a basis for morality. Likewise, in much Jewish literature, those who deny the age to come have no basis for morality (cf., e.g., Wisdom of Solomon 2:1-24; Pharisaic accusations against the Sadducees). Ridiculing the righteous was also understood to be characteristically wicked behavior; for example, *1 Enoch* speaks of sinners who mock God, denying his revelation; the Dead Sea Scrolls complain about those who mocked their community's righteous teacher.³⁸

Another group of scholars give this commentary:

For Peter the “scoffing scoffers” are an acute threat that demands immediate attention. Peter cannot resist also heaping up his persistent claim throughout the letter that the false teachers, these “scoffing scoffers,” are driven by “their own lusts.” *Epithymia* (“lust”) and its close cousin, *aselgeiai* (“license, as in ‘licentious’”), appear six times in 2 Peter: *epithymia* in 1:4; 2:10; 3:3, and *aselgeiai* in 2:2, 7, 18. In all cases Peter is indicating that the immorality of the false teachers is their lack of self-control, which is another way of saying that they have not cultivated the core character of a follower of Jesus (cf. 1:5-7, the “chain of virtues,” which includes “self-control”).

Verse 4 repeats the challenge of the “scoffing scoffers,” perhaps in their own words: “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!” The scoffing has three parts: (1) a taunting denial of the Parousia (the Second Coming), (2) an odd statement about the death of ancestors, and (3) a sweeping assertion about a static creation. The scoffers’ question, “Where is the promise of his coming?” is a taunt, as the following exclamation shows. To paraphrase both the question and exclamation, the scoffers say, “Oh, yeah? Nothing has changed!” To question the teaching of the Parousia is one thing. To reject with a taunt is quite another.

The second part of the quotation from the scoffing opponents, “For ever since our ancestors died,” is odd for two reasons. First is the confusion about who the “ancestors” might be. Some, like Green³⁹, see the “ancestors” to be a reference to the Old Testament prophets. Others, such as Kraftchick⁴⁰, see the “ancestors” to be a reference to the first generation of followers of Jesus. While we recognize the dilemma and its implications, we wonder how much stock should be put into a taunt from scoffing opponents. Who they meant by “ancestors” would neither soften nor harden their taunt. The sweeping assertion about a static creation is an intriguing opportunity to further identify the scoffing false teachers with some form of popular Epicureanism. As Neyrey points out, Epicureanism argued against any school of thought or religion that relied upon

³⁸ Keener, [Background](#), p. 704.

³⁹ Michael Green, [The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude](#) (2d ed.; TNTC; Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1987) 140, notes that “since every other reference to ‘the fathers’ in the New Testament . . . means ‘the Old Testament fathers,’ such I take the probable meaning here.”

⁴⁰ Steven J. Kraftchick, [Jude, 2 Peter](#) (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002) 152, notes that “in the present context [of 2 Pet], the expression [‘our fathers’] refers more generally to the first generation of believers. By the time 2 Peter was written, these believers likely had died. Since Jesus had promised to return during that generation’s lifetime, their death called into question the validity of his promises.”

sophisticated understandings of “cosmology,” “freedom,” “unfulfilled prophecy,” or “injustice.”⁴¹ The scoffers claim that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!” is a cosmological assertion with implications for freedom, unfulfilled prophecy, and justice/injustice. It betrays their opinion that creation is a stable entity. It further opens the idea— which is consistent with the teaching of Epicurus—that creation came about randomly and that there is no presence of divine influence in creation.⁴²

C. The Day of the Lord and God's Timing (3:8-9)

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (2 Peter 3.8)

Tom Valletta wrote:

While some readers of the Bible throughout the world regard that the creation of the earth took six 24-hour days, other readers of the Bible refer to Peter's statement 'that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' (2 Pet. 3:8) as evidence that the process of creation may have taken six thousand years.

Latter-day Saints have additional information that allows a third view: that each 'day' of the Creation was of **unspecified duration**, and that the creation of the earth took place during an **unknown length of time**. In fact, Abraham stresses that time is synonymous with day. For example, Abraham 4:8 summarizes the second creative period by stating that 'this was the *second time that they called night and day*.' This usage is completely consistent with the ancient Hebrew. The Hebrew word *YOM*, often translated 'day,' can also mean 'time' or 'period.' In other words, the term translated 'day' in Genesis could be appropriately read as 'period.'⁴³

D. The Elements Will Be Destroyed (3:10)

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3.10)

The analogy positing the Lord's imminent arrival 'as a thief in the night' is deemed more pertinent to the broader world, warranting non-application to the ecclesiastical constituency. The church embodies the symbol of the pure and expectant bride awaiting the advent of the Bridegroom, thus precluding any eventuality of being caught unprepared. Rather, the church is enjoined to exercise unwavering vigilance, exercising patience with preparedness, akin to keeping their lamps adequately supplied with oil, to greet the imminent arrival of the awaited bridegroom. Brother Robert Millet put it this way:

The scriptures speak of the Master returning as 'a thief in the night.' (1 Thes. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10.) It is true that no mortal has known, does now know, or will yet know the precise day of the Lord's Second Advent. This is true for prophets and apostles as well as the rank and file of society and the Church. On the other hand, the people of God are promised that if they are in tune with the

⁴¹ Neyrey, “Form and Background,” 409.

⁴² Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, Watson E. Mills, [1 & 2 Peter, Jude](#), Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2010, p. 350-351.

⁴³ Thomas R. Valletta, "[I Have a Question](#)," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, emphasis added.

Spirit, they can discern the season. The Apostle Paul chose the descriptive analogy of a pregnant woman about to deliver. She may not know the exact hour or day when the birth is to take place, but one thing she knows for sure: it will be soon. It *must* be soon! The impressions and feelings and signs within her own body so testify. In that day, surely the members of the body of Christ will be pleading for the Lord to deliver the travailing earth, to bring an end to corruption and degradation, to introduce an era of peace and righteousness. And those who give heed to the words of scripture, and especially to the living oracles, will stand as the 'children of light, and the children of the day,' those who 'are not of the night, nor of darkness.' (1 Thes. 5:2-5.) In the Doctrine and Covenants is found this admonition: 'The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and *it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night*-therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief.' (D&C 106:4-5 emphasis added.)⁴⁴

VI. Exhortation to Godly Living and Diligence (2 Peter 3:11-18)

A. Holy and Godly Living in Anticipation of the Day of God (3:11-13)

"What manner of persons ought ye to be?" (2 Peter 3.11)

In 2 Peter 3.11, the apostle urges Christians to live holy lives, closely mirroring the exemplary character of the Lord Jesus. The verse emphasizes the call for personal sanctification and moral uprightness as an essential aspect of the Christian faith. As followers of Christ, believers are to be distinct and set apart from the patterns of the world, diligently pursuing righteousness and godliness. By imitating the Lord's selflessness, love, and compassion, Christians can demonstrate the transformative power of Christ's teachings and exemplify the virtues of humility and service. The call to be holy people echoes the core teachings of Christianity, emphasizing the importance of living in harmony with God's will and reflecting the light of Christ to the world. In a world filled with temptations and distractions, 2 Peter 3.11 stands as a poignant reminder for believers to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, striving to be holy as He is holy. The Prophet Joseph Smith put it this way:

When I contemplate the rapidity with which the great and glorious day of the coming of the Son of Man advances, when he shall come to receive his Saints unto himself, where they shall dwell in his presence and be crowned with glory and immortality, when I consider that soon the heavens are to be shaken and the earth tremble and reel to and fro and that the heavens are to be unfolded as a scroll when it is rolled up, that every mountain and island are to flee away-I cry out in my heart, 'What manner of person ought I to be in all holy conversation and godliness!'⁴⁵

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Peter 3.12)

The inquiry about the process of the heavens' destruction and their possible complete dissolution necessitates a careful comprehension of the term "heavens" within this context, which pertains specifically to the earth's immediate atmosphere rather than the celestial realm where God resides. In scriptural context, the term "heaven" is employed to denote our immediate atmospheric space, as evidenced by references such as 'the fowl...may fly above the earth in the open expanse of heaven' (Abr. 4:20, Gen. 1:20). To correctly interpret the intended meaning of the passage, it is crucial to recognize

⁴⁴ Robert L. Millet, [The Mormon Faith: A New Look at Christianity](#), Deseret Book, 1998, p. 162.

⁴⁵ Kent P. Jackson, comp. and ed., [Joseph Smith's Commentary on the Bible](#), Deseret Book, 1994, p. 210.

that the heavens mentioned here pertain to the earthly atmospheric region surrounding us rather than the abode of the divine. Joseph Fielding Smith asserted:

The passing away of the heavens has reference to the heavens which surround the earth, not the sidereal heavens. So we have a key to the meaning of one earth passing away and another coming. As our earth shall pass away and receive its resurrection, so has it been with other earths and so will it be with earths yet to come. They will be re-created, made eternal and find a place perpetually which the Lord has designed for them in the sidereal heavens. These great orbs that we see in the heavens are not 'passing away.' Most of them evidently have attained their state of permanency. They have filled the measure of temporal probation as this earth is now filling its probation of mortality, and when its work is finished as a temporal earth it will be exalted. Likewise will others be exalted as countless earths have been and have attained their state of immortality.⁴⁶

B. The Lord's Patience and Salvation (3:14-16)

Our beloved brother Paul (wrote) some things hard to be understood (2 Peter 3.15-16).

God's patience allows salvation for those on whose behalf he delays; cf. 1 Peter 3:20 on Genesis 6:3, returning to the judgment image of the flood (2 Pet 3:5-7). Calling a writer's work "hard to understand" in antiquity was not an insult (as it often is today); it could mean that it was complex and brilliant. Jewish teachers said that the message of the Scriptures could be "distorted" by misinterpreting them. Second-century Gnostics and, in the first century, many Jewish and probably Christian groups were distorting the Scriptures, some even to play down a future judgment (perhaps by allegorizing it).

By the late first century, another early Christian writer (1 Clement) asserted the inspiration of Paul's letters; although Paul's early writings had undoubtedly not been collected before Peter's death, Peter may have known of some of them from his travels among the churches. Even though Josephus and other writers asserted that Judaism had a closed canon, some Jewish groups (such as the Qumran community and Diaspora communities that used various recensions of the Septuagint) seem to have had a fluid idea as to where Scripture ended and other edifying literature began. Although some scholars have reasonably used this statement identifying Paul as Scripture to argue for a post-Petrine date for 2 Peter, it would not have been impossible for the real Peter to view Paul's writings as Scripture if he accepted Paul's apostolic status and hence the possibility that some of his writings were prophetically inspired. Much that was prophetically inspired, however, never became Scripture. Thus if Peter wrote these words, they reflect a remarkable insight for his day.⁴⁷

C. Final Words and Closing Blessing (3:17-18)

In 2 Peter 3:17-18, Peter exhorts his audience to guard against false teachings by growing in their understanding of Christ. The early Christians faced the looming threat of apostasy, with misleading doctrines spreading rapidly around them. In the face of such challenges, Peter urges them to remain steadfast, rooted in the truth of Christ's teachings, and to be vigilant against the allure of erroneous

⁴⁶ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Man, His Origin and Destiny*, Deseret Book, 1954, p. 274-275.

⁴⁷ Keener, [Background](#), p. 705.

beliefs. To combat the rising tide of false teachers, it is imperative for believers to pursue spiritual maturity and continuous growth in Christ. Even philosophical systems that rigidly categorized humanity into righteous or unrighteous, wise or foolish, acknowledged the importance of progress among the righteous or wise. Similarly, Peter encourages his hearers to strive for spiritual advancement and discernment, recognizing that standing firm in their faith requires active engagement in the pursuit of truth and righteousness. Through this process of growth, the early Christians can fortify themselves against the encroaching apostasy and anchor their beliefs firmly in the unwavering foundation of Christ's teachings.