

LESSON TWENTY-THREE:

The Epistles of Peter

I & II Peter

Introduction:

There is little evidence within these letters to help us know when they were written or with certainty to whom. We are told clearly that Peter, the apostle known to us from the gospels and Acts, is the author of both letters; though there are those who suppose that two different men wrote these two letters. The difference in style may easily be explained by the fact that Silvanus did the writing of the first letter (5:12) at Peter's instruction and, since no other writer is mentioned in the second letter, we may assume that Peter wrote it himself. But, as Peter teaches us in the second letter, the true author of all Scripture is God's Holy Spirit, using the talents and skills which he has given to each one chosen to be a human writer of the Divine Word (see II Pet. 1:20,21).

The second letter was written quite late, when Peter was anticipating his own death soon — much as we saw in Paul's second letter to Timothy. By that time, we observe (II Pet. 3:15,16) that the bulk of Paul's letters had not only been written but were well known in the church.

What Do We Find Here?

I PETER:

The Call to be God's Holy People

The title I have chosen for this letter, of course, reflects what Paul had written in Ephesians 1:4; however, it seems appropriate to what Peter is saying here; and this should not be strange to us. From the beginning of our Survey of the Old Testament, we have seen that the purpose of God to have a people holy and without blemish to live in His presence forever, in a bond of love with God and with one another, permeates all that is written in Scripture. Likewise, from the beginning, from Genesis 3:15, certainly, we see that this purpose of God can only be accomplished in God's provision of His Son to do for us what we, on our own, could never do.

As we noted the history of Peter's life in the study of the Gospels and Acts, we saw a man who had to be convinced that he needed Christ; but when he was convinced and had himself received the promises, he began boldly to preach the gospel of his Saviour, Christ Jesus. Peter was not then complete nor was he all he ought to be, but we see him grow as he learned that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews and as he learned that he must make a complete break with the Judaism of his day in order to be consistent in his witness for Christ.

In these letters we hear from the mature Peter, more steadfast than he was in the events recorded in Acts 10, and more steadfast than he was in the events recorded by Paul in Galatians 2:11ff.

God, no doubt, used all of Peter's experiences in spiritual growth to enable him to be an apt teacher of others to strive toward that goal which God has set for all of His children. By writing and by example, Peter was well prepared for this task. In his brief salutation, Peter addresses *the elect*, adopting terminology used both by Christ and Paul. Peter uses that term four times in this one letter: here, where it refers to the recipients of the letter; 2:4, where it refers to Christ, chosen of God as the foundation of the church; 2:6, where it has the same use; and 2:9, where it refers to the entire people of God. The use of this term by Peter, therefore, shows that he understands the individual believers in Christ to be chosen by God to be members of His church on earth and in heaven forever, as they are related to Christ. Peter, further, by the choice of the term "foreknowledge," speaks of God having determined this by His own decision, before anyone did anything good or bad. The term "foreknowledge" should not be interpreted as meaning that God first knew what we would do and then determined our eternal destiny; rather, the term means what the term "know" or "choice" always means in reference to God: to *predetermine* (foreordain). In this sense, God "knew" Abraham, i.e., chose him to be His child (Gen. 18:19). In this same sense, the Lord "knows" all of the righteous (Psalm 1:6). According to Psalm one, not to be known in that sense by the Lord is to perish. For this

reason, our Westminster Confession of Faith places considerable stress on the eternal decrees of God (ch. 3).

Peter also adds that God's foreknowing (electing) us to be His children was in order that we might be sanctified to obey — having been cleansed in the blood of Christ (1:2). We see, then, that both Peter and Paul teach the same truth concerning our having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy, without blemish, in His presence, in love (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:1,2). Before calling the readers to fulfill the purpose of their redemption — to be holy and without blemish in love — he wishes them to contemplate for a little while, the marvel of their redemption.

1. The marvel of the Gospel (1:3-12)

He begins this section much as the psalmist begins many of the Psalms: with a burst of praise to God for His mercy (1:3). At the center of the showing of God's mercy is the resurrection of Christ which made it possible for us who were dead in sins to live again in the presence of God (v.3; cf. Eph. 2:1ff.). Beyond the marvel of living before God in this present life, Peter notes the marvel of being assured of an incorruptible inheritance, reserved in heaven for each believer in Christ (v.4). Peter, no doubt has in mind that Old Testament inheritance, Canaan, which was received by the Israelites to be their home. It lasted as a blessing just so long as the people were faithful to God; but when they began to turn from Him, God began to remove the land from them until, at last, it had all faded away. This will not happen to these who have believed in Christ; for they have an inheritance reserved, guaranteed — not on the basis of human obedience but on the basis of Christ's work that cannot fail (v.5). It is no little thing, therefore, that Peter calls these believers to rejoice in the present world even though they may well be suffering at the hands of unbelievers because of their faith (1:6-12). The very trials themselves will serve to prove that their faith is true faith; as they stand faithful to the Lord in the face of opposition, God will be glorified (vs.7,8). They have a privilege not granted to the prophets of the Old Testament, no, not even to

angels in heaven: to see the full grace of God worked out in their lives through Christ (vs.9-12).

Having looked in a refreshing new way at the privilege of suffering in the world for Christ, the readers are now exhorted to live in accord with the way God's children ought to live.

2. The call to be holy (1:13-2:10)

We note very early in Peter's writing that he assumes what Paul, with great emphasis, had shown in his letters; namely, that whatever promises were originally given to the Israelites as a race in the Old Testament times, are now applicable to all believers in Jesus Christ — the remnant who believed — so that whatever calls of God, whatever promises of God were, in the Old Testament, given to Israel, are now given to all who believe in Christ.

So here, Peter applies the words of Leviticus 19:2: "Ye shall be holy; for I am Holy" to his readers, those who belong to Christ (1:13-25). He calls them to live as children of obedience (v.14), remembering that their success as God's children depends on God's grace to fulfill the hope that is in them. We must remember that when they are called to be holy they are called, as were the Israelites of old, to be totally committed to the Lord and to no other. They are to regard themselves as belonging only to the Lord.

The life of God's child on earth is described here as a sojourning, a term frequently used in the Old Testament to describe the temporary nature of the trials of God's child in the world. They are to live daily, therefore, in fear (respect for God), remembering that they began their new life by Christ, and not by any merit of their own; likewise, they must continue to live in Christ, not depending on their own strength, but his. By this, their hope and faith continue to be in God, not in themselves (vs.18-21).

Peter, in thinking of Christ as a lamb — without blemish and without spot (v.19) — is no doubt thinking back to those early days when John the Baptist first pointed to Jesus, calling him the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Peter's brother Andrew had been with John when he pointed to Jesus, and later Andrew found Peter and brought him to Christ (John 1:35ff.). Note again

how Peter relates his message to that of Paul, speaking of Jesus as one foreknown before the foundation of the world as our Saviour (v.20; cf. Eph. 1:4).

Before closing this section, Peter reminds them that since they came to rebirth through the Word of God proclaimed, they must remain in that same Word as they grow spiritually (vs.22-25). As with Paul, so with Peter, the ultimate evidence of Christ living in them is the fruit of the Spirit in their lives focusing upon the first of the fruits: love (v.22).

The last section pertaining to their being called to be holy, stresses in particular their having become the true successors to those of the Old Testament who were God's elect race and holy nation (2:1-10). Three times in this one brief passage Peter uses the term "elect," as we noted earlier.

Peter begins with a reminder of their spiritual status when they first became believers in Christ. They were born again, as newborn babes in Christ; and like babes in the natural world, they must grow by good nurture (v.2). By "salvation," spoken of as a goal in their spiritual growth, Peter does not mean simply their being saved from sin and death; but in the term "salvation," he comprehends the whole gamut of spiritual growth from a babe in Christ to full maturity as believers — much as Paul does when he says that we are to work out our own salvation (put it to work) (Phil. 2:12). And, like Paul, Peter shows that the ability to work out our salvation to its fruition, depends not on our own strength but on our abiding in Christ (vs.3-5).

Peter's figure of the spiritual house is to be compared with Paul's similar concept. In all cases, whether the spiritual life be compared to a tree growing, to a vine bearing fruit, to a building being built, always, the idea is that it is a gradual thing, not done overnight, but by continuing, by abiding in the strength of the Builder or Farmer who builds or prunes in accord with His own good purpose.

Peter notes sadly that the Israelites, for the most part, rejected Christ as the true cornerstone and thus eliminated themselves from being a part of God's building. But he clearly teaches that these readers, already described as those who have believed in Jesus

Christ (1:8), are God's elect *race*. They are His *priesthood*, God's *holy nation*. They are *the inheritance of God*. In language as clear as one could make it, Peter is here saying that the New Testament believers in Jesus Christ are the true successors of God's people of the Old Testament times.

It is as though Peter were taking these people back to Sinai, back to Exodus 19, where God had said all of these things about Israel whom He had redeemed out of Egypt (Exod. 19:4-6), and saying to them: "These promises and this high calling which were once given to Israel as a nation are now given to you!"

3. *The call to be without blemish (2:11-4:18)*

Perhaps taking his cue from the words of Jesus which Peter no doubt heard with his own ears, he calls them to let their good works so shine that God will be glorified (2:11-12; cf. Matt. 5:16). This was always God's will for His people. God gave the Law immediately after the words of Exodus 19, not as the means of their becoming God's children but as the means of God's children expressing their salvation and new life in God. Paul also clearly teaches that we are saved by *grace* through faith, but we show that salvation by our *works* (Eph. 2:8-10).

Included in the call to live lives that are exemplary before the unbelieving world is the requirement to be subject to the earthly governments (vs.13-17). He is in full accord with what Paul also wrote on this subject, as we have noted before (Rom. 13:1ff.). Here, Peter cautions against the abuse of Christian liberty by using it as an excuse not to pay one's taxes or dues to the governments of the world (v.16).

As Paul had done, so Peter shows that the matter of living as God's child in the world means that every facet of our lives is affected: the work we do daily and our relationships with one another (vs.18-3:12).

Servants are therefore called to be subject to masters, whether those masters deserve respect or not (vs.18-25). Christian slaves might cry out that such an obligation on their part is unfair. Peter retorts that, rather, it is their opportunity to suffer wrongly for the

sake of Christ just as he once suffered wrongly for their sakes. Jesus is not asking of them any more than he has already done himself (vs.18-21).

Following this, Peter describes the suffering of Jesus on our behalf in most beautiful and moving terms, reminiscent of Isaiah's writing in Isaiah 53 (2:22-25). Jesus was not only our Saviour by his suffering and death, but he also gave to us an example of how we should be ready to suffer wrong in this world at the hands of unbelievers, to God's glory. If we are unfairly spoken against by others, we are not to reply in like kind by saying ugly things about those who persecute us verbally. If we are ill-treated by others so that it hurts deeply, we are, nevertheless, not to threaten them with vengeance. To do so would be to follow the world's way, not the way of God's child (v.23).

Christ endured all kinds of hardness because he would be accountable to his Father. We, likewise, ought to endure all things because we are to give a good accounting to Jesus Christ (vs.24,25).

Husbands and wives in the home have splendid opportunity to glorify the Lord in all of their relationships, so that their children may see and glorify the Lord and so that the unbelieving neighbors might see and know the difference Christ makes in the marriage and home (3:1-7).

Wives are to be in subjection even when their husbands do not believe, as a means of glorifying the Lord and, hopefully, as a means of bringing the unbelieving husband to the Lord (vs.1-6). The good wife described here by Peter is quite similar to the pattern of life displayed by the good wife in Proverbs 31:10-31.

Husbands, too, are both to respect their wives and to recognize that though they are in submission in the home to their husbands, nevertheless, the two are, in God's sight, equal, so far as the inheritance of eternal life is concerned (3:7).

The rest of this section faces the very real possibility that as these believers do seek to obey the Lord and live as they have been taught in His Word,

they will suffer for it at the hands of the world. The cost of being a Christian is very evident here (3:8-4:19).

They are called to the very difficult task of blessing those who do evil to them (vs.8-12), even as Jesus had taught (Luke 6:28). In doing so, they are to remember that the Lord had taught that those who do suffer for righteousness' sake are blessed (vs.13-14; cf. Matt. 5:10-12). Instead of feeling sorry for themselves, God's children ought always to be prepared, through such sufferings and trials as this world may offer, to give an answer to any man of the hope in them (v.15). The point is that when they carry a cheerful disposition through their trials, exhibiting their faith in the Lord, others will wonder and some will inquire how these things can be. Believers ought to be ready at such times to proclaim the gospel of their Lord.

Peter continually places Christ before the readers as the example of suffering and the reason that they too can expect to suffer for Christ's sake (4:1-6). The very suffering for Christ itself indicates that they belong to Christ and are no longer under the sins that condemn the rest of the world (4:1). This teaching is quite similar to what Paul said in Romans 8:17. Just as soon as the believers put away the sins of the world from their lives, they immediately stand out as strange and peculiar people to the world (v.4). But, Peter insists, it was just because God would change the conduct of men who were dead in sins, to give them new life in Christ, that the gospel was preached in the first place (v.6). In other words, Peter is here saying that they should not be surprised when they have to pay the consequence of their faith, in the world, by suffering at the hands of unbelievers; this is what the gospel is all about!

Peter reminds them that their time of suffering is short and the end is near for the hearers (4:7-11); or, as Paul put it, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward." (Rom. 8:18) They must, therefore, be fervent in their love and ministry to one another, using every opportunity they have to glorify God, no matter the cost (vs.8-11).

Peter closes this section, which is so full of words about Christians suffering, by reminding them that some Christians suffer for having done foolish or evil things; but he teaches that the readers ought rather to suffer as a Christian, for God's glory (4:12-18). It is not strange or abnormal for Christians to suffer (v.12). When they do not please the Lord, however, they may be sure that they will be dealt with by the Lord who will have His people do what is right. God will be severe with His own who sin, how much more with those who are not believers! (vs.17,18).

4. The call to submit to discipline under God willingly (4:19-5:11)

In this submission, the elders of the church are to be the example (5:1-4). Here, Peter seems to be using the term "elder" for an office of the church, as did Paul. Their oversight is to be with humility, seeing themselves as undershepherds under the chief Shepherd, Christ. The standards Peter sets here for elders is quite similar to those found in Paul's pastoral epistles.

All members are called to be humbled before the Lord, knowing that those who resist the discipline which the Lord may lay on them — acting proudly — will be resisted by the Lord (5:5-6). This lesson, as we noted in I Samuel 2, was clearly learned by Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

Perhaps in response to the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Peter too calls these readers to cast their care on the Lord (v.7). Jesus had taught his own not to be anxious and to trust the Lord to supply their every need (Matt. 6:25ff.). Later, he invited all who would, to come and cast their burdens upon him (Matt. 11:28-30).

As Paul had done, so Peter reminds these that they have been called into Christian warfare, to resist the devil in the full armor of the Lord (5:8-11). In their suffering for Christ's sake, they can share in the suffering of many others who have, before them, stood in the faith, and also share in the sufferings of many more yet to come (v.9). Above all, Peter assures them that such suffering has great meaning and purpose in God's sight for their own good. God will, by their

sufferings, bring them to what He wishes them to be (v.10).

In the brief closing, Peter refers to Rome (where he is residing at the time) as Babylon (v.13) — alluding to the judgment of God on Babylon and the symbolism by which Babylon in the Old and New Testaments takes on the meaning of the kingdoms of this world as opposed to the Kingdom of God. We shall see John use the term similarly in Revelation.

II PETER:

The Call to Complete Their Spiritual Growth

Peter plunges immediately into the subject matter of this second letter, from the opening words of the letter.

1. Be diligent to develop the salvation which God has given to you (1:1-11)

Peter reminds them, first of all, just *what* the *salvation* is which they have gained in Christ (1:1-4). It is *the reception* of the *righteousness of God* upon themselves by the work of their Saviour Jesus Christ (v.1). It is also *the privilege to know God* and to *gain increasing knowledge of Him* through His grace (v.2). Moreover, it is *through this knowledge of Him* and His will for them that they are *able to grow into all that God wills them to be*, pertaining to life and godliness, through the power of God (v.3). Therefore, salvation is far more than an escape from the corruption in the world; it is the privilege to be partakers of a new nature in Christ, to be Christ-like — bearing his image (v.4).

They are called, therefore, to begin with the faith which the Lord has granted to them and to build on it lives that are according to the very nature of God, and to His glory (1:5-11). The virtues described here, as part of the nature of God's child (vs.5-7), are called by Paul the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22,23). They are one and the same as those characteristics of Christ himself, when he bore the image of God among men on earth. Furthermore, they are like those characteristics of the Lord by which He chose to be known by His people in the Old Testament (Exod. 34:6,7). They are the goal to which the Lord calls all of His children, the high

calling of God in Christ — of which Paul speaks in Philippians 3, and for which he strove daily.

Not to do this, and to be content simply to be “saved” from the evil one and from death is to be blind (v.9). Every believer ought to exercise all of the full privilege of being God’s child daily by striving toward those goals which God has set for him, assured of God’s continued help (v.11), or, as Paul put it, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:13)

2. Remember that to do so means to be dependent on God’s Sure Word (1:12-21)

As Paul had emphasized in writing to Timothy, so Peter here shows that spiritual growth depends absolutely on guidance by the Word of God. He had undoubtedly emphasized this as he had taught these people before; now he reminds them of what he has formerly taught (vs.12-15). He sees his own death in the near future, and he wishes these to be aware of their need to stand solidly in God’s written Word when he and the other apostles are gone.

Peter speaks here of his privilege as an apostle of having been an eyewitness to the gospel and to the life of Jesus Christ (vs.16-18). They even had opportunity to see Christ glorified on earth during his ministry when, on the mountain, Jesus was transfigured before them; and they even heard with their own ears the very voice of God!

What a privilege this was! Few were left now, as Peter wrote this epistle, who had been privileged to walk with Jesus in his earthly ministry. Peter knew that he too would soon be gone. Where then would be the witness to the gospel? Where then would be the voice of authority declaring “This is the truth, believe it!”

Peter wished the people to be prepared for his departure and for the departure of others who had known Christ. He wished them to realize now that they had already an authority far more significant and lasting than Peter’s experiences with Jesus on the mount. That superior and more enduring authority was the Word of God written (vs.19-21). He calls it the word of prophecy, *more sure* (v.19). By this he means

that the written Word of God will continue in its authority long after the voice of Peter and the voices of those with him who knew Jesus have been silenced. It is then a word more sure.

It is described by Peter as a lamp shining in a dark place to lighten the way (v.19). The figure of the Word of God as a lamp is found also in Psalm 119:105. In short, the Word of God, the Scriptures, are the sole infallible guide for the believer and his sole means of being guided by the will of God. When Peter is gone, that Word will remain; and so they must learn to respect it and use it.

While this may seem nothing new to us today, we ought to remember that in those times, the people had the privilege of hearing eyewitnesses of the gospel and might well have neglected the study of the Scriptures. This was Peter’s concern. He wished them to know that all Scripture was God-given and not from the thoughts of men (v.20). His statement on inspiration, given in verse 21, is the clearest statement found anywhere of how the Holy Spirit was the true author of God’s Word written.

3. The challenge to their spiritual growth: a rising tide of unbelief (2:1-3:18)

The rest of Peter’s second letter is concerned with the necessity of their being prepared to face the rising tide of unbelief to come. Unbelief will follow in the wake of the false teachings and heresies of false teachers, just as in the Old Testament there were false prophets (2:1-3). Many will follow these false teachers; even the readers are warned that they might well be susceptible to their destructive heresies. None can afford to be unprepared for them.

The rest of this chapter reminds us of what we read in Jude. First, Peter states that the judgment of these false teachers is sure, having been exemplified many times in the Old Testament by similar false teachers and those rebelling against the will of God (2:4-8). He mentions in particular the judgment of angels (as did Jude), the judgment of the ancient world by the Flood and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. He describes Noah as a preacher of righteousness (v.5), indicating that Noah was active

prior to the flood, not only in building the ark but in proclaiming God's Word. He speaks of righteous Lot, whose soul was vexed by the sins of Sodom all around him (vs.7,8). Without this word, we might have some difficulty knowing whether Lot ever was saved; but this reassures us.

From all of this — the destruction of the wicked and the deliverance of righteous Noah and righteous Lot — Peter draws the principle that the Lord knows the difference between the righteous and the wicked, and He will deliver His own every time (v.9). This ought to reassure believers in a church that was rapidly being filled by hypocrites. True believers might not be easily discerned by men, but God knows the difference.

Turning to the wicked, those who turn from the gospel, Peter shows that their judgment is sure (vs.9-19). His descriptions of them are quite similar to those of Jude. Above all, they are exceedingly dangerous to the church (vs.13,18,19).

He is clearly talking here of people who have outwardly joined with the true believers in the church. They have pretended to have true faith and have gone through all the motions of being members of the church, but their hearts are far from God. Having rejected the only gospel which is able to save, willfully turning their backs on it, they have no other hope. They become immune to the gospel (vs.20-22).

Peter is not saying here, even as the author of Hebrews did not say in a similar context, that they once truly believed and then turned from their faith. One is not born again (brought into true faith) and then lost. These are those, like so many Israelites in the Old Testament, who took part in the full activity of the people of God and who even became leaders in the Old Testament church but who never were really God's people. From Genesis four, God has always made a careful distinction between the visible (apparent) church and the invisible church (known only to God). All members of the invisible church are members of the visible (are joined to the apparent people of God); but not all members of the visible church are members of God's true church. There always has been and always will be, in this world, a remnant who are saved, i.e.,

those who have put their trust in the Lord and are the born again in the church. Cain, a worshipper of God in the earliest church, was not born again. Nicodemus, when he talked with Jesus, though a leader and teacher in the church of that day, was not born again. And so it goes.

Peter wants the readers to remember what he is now saying because in the last days mockers will come, challenging the truth and reliability of the very Word of God itself (3:1-7). Both Peter and Paul knew they were in "the last days" (the time between Christ's resurrection and ours at His return: Acts 2:17; II Tim. 3:1; cf. Heb. 1:2; James 5:3). Therefore, they wanted their readers to be prepared for it. It would be a time not only when men would increasingly walk as pleased themselves, but also a time when the very authority of God's Word would be challenged (vs.3ff.). Paul had spoken similarly to Timothy (II Timothy 4).

It is most interesting that the doubts they would express in the last days concerning the fulfillment of Scripture and the return of Christ would be based on their questioning the reliability of Scriptures, particularly those portions in the first eleven chapters of Genesis (vs.4ff.). Peter says that because they ignored what the Old Testament taught about the creation and the flood (a point we sought to make in our study of the early chapters of Genesis in the Old Testament survey) they could not, therefore, rightly understand what the New Testament teaches about the return of Christ (vs.5,6). They have no fear of a final judgment, not believing in the judgment of the flood either. But judgment will come! (v.7)

Men interpret the fact that time passes on, and one year is pretty much the same as another, as an indication that there never will be a change. But the reason time seems to go on in an endless fashion is that they misunderstand the goodness and longsuffering of God who waits, before bringing destruction, until every one who is to believe has believed (vs.8,9). What seems an endless procession of years to men is but a moment in God's eternity. He has time.

But the end will surely come; and just as the flood came on the ancient world, so suddenly will

Christ come (vs.10-13). Peter teaches, as do Paul and Christ, that when Christ comes, that will be the end. There is no evidence of a second chance at that time for anyone. The coming of Christ the second time and the destruction of this heaven and earth, which we now know, would appear to be simultaneous (v.10).

That, in itself, ought to make the readers more diligent to be ready for Christ's return and to strive to be all that the Lord would have them to be — so that when he returns he will find them faithful (vs.11,12).

Peter — as Paul stressed in his writing to the Galatians, and as the writer to the Hebrews also emphasized — declares that our hope and promises from God are to be fulfilled, not in this old earth and heaven which we now see, but in the new heavens and the new earth — just as Isaiah also taught (v.13; cf. Isa. 66:22ff.).

As the believers tarry and endure hardness for Christ's sake in this world, they are, therefore, to realize that God's delay in ending persecution and in destroying the wicked is for the sake of the salvation of those whom the Lord will yet call (vs.14ff.). He calls as witness to what he has said, the writings of Paul, which would indicate that by this time Paul's writings were well known in the church at large (v.15). Peter does not hesitate to reckon Paul's writings with the rest of Scripture, showing, as we indicated, that they were regarded as God's Word when given to the church (v.16).

We see also that, already, there were those who were trying to twist Scripture to mean what *they* wished it to mean, not what *it did* mean (v.16).

The letter closes on a warning, lest any of the readers be carried away and numbered among those being led astray by errors. The best way to avoid this was to grow spiritually by the grace of God, just in the manner Peter had described in this letter (vs.17,18).

What Additional Information is Helpful?

We shall not add here anything beyond what has been said elsewhere in this quarterly about the background of Rome and the Roman Empire and the background of Judaism. It would be well to review those backgrounds in the study of these two letters.