

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **1 & 2 PETER LESSON 4 (2 Peter Chapters 2-3)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Welcome to our study of 2 Peter. In this lesson we see that in chapters 2 and 3 Peter is going to remind us that false teachers and false teaching do exist, and that we must be aware of it or we will miss out on God’s promises and all the things that God has given to us.

In 2 Peter 2:1 Peter makes the point that even among God’s people, false teachers do exist. Peter says, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.” To bury our heads in the sand and act like everyone everywhere is teaching the truth, and that anyone who stands up with any religious persona, must be a god is utter foolishness. We must realize that false teachers exist in the world, and that false teachers exist in the church. Peter says it. The Bible says it over and over again. And Jesus said it in Matthew 7:15 where He said that wolves in sheep’s clothing would try to destroy the flock. In Revelation 2 and 3 we see that there were those among the Christians mentioned there who were teaching the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. There were those who were following Jezebel. There were false teachers then, just as Jesus promised there would be. And there are false teachers today. Jude 3-4 teaches us to “contend earnestly for the faith, which was one for all delivered to the saints, for certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God.” There are false teachers in the church today, and we must make sure that we do not allow their teachings to corrupt us. In 1 Timothy 1:18-20 Paul said that some had suffered shipwreck concerning the faith, “of whom were Hymenaeus and Alexander.” Paul said that he had delivered them unto Satan “that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

To make sure and remember that false teachers exist is a valid principle for us. We need to realize that we must be wary and on the watch for them. Here is the best way to do that. In 1 John 4:1 John said, “Test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” We must test every teacher we hear to be sure that he is “of God.” People who teach the truth will not get mad or get upset. Rather, they will appreciate us for doing that. In 1 Thessalonians 5:21 we are told to “prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.” Anytime you hear someone teaching the Gospel, you get your Bible so you can check to see if truth is being taught. You do what the Bereans did in Acts 17:11. Hear what the person has to say. Then search the Scriptures to see if what he is saying is true. We need to remember that we must not teach error because there is a punishment coming on false teachers. In 2 Peter 2:4ff., we see that punishment identified. “God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them

into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.” False teachers will one day be judged just like the angels who disobeyed God. False teachers will receive judgment and punishment like those in the unrighteous world during the days of Noah who perished because of their ungodliness. So it will be with false teachers today. According to 2 Peter 2:6, false teachers are like those in Sodom and Gomorrah. They are seeking selfish lusts. They are out for what they can get out of it. They are in it for their fun, desire, and passions. They do not care who they teach falsely, as long as they have a lot of fun on the way. Too many false teachers, as we have seen in our day and age, are more concerned about the almighty dollar than they are about pleasing the Almighty Himself. So many of these false teachers or other religious people will get on television and claim that they can do all sorts of things. But they always end by saying, “If you believe what we have said today, then write us a check and send it in.” Here is what is unique about New Testament Christianity. True Christians are not concerned about your pocketbook. We are concerned about your soul. We want you to check what we say in order to make sure that it is true to the Word of God. We will not ask you to send us a check. We are going to ask you to get your life in line with the will of God and give as God commanded on the first day of the week at the local congregation (1 Cor. 16:1-2). There are false teachers, and their punishment is coming. You always need to check what you hear. If it is according to the will of God, then obey it because God said it, not because men did.

Another reminder that Peter gives us is that anytime we live in a sinful environment or area, it will oppress and torment us. Look at 2 Peter 2:7-8.

“God delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds).”

Lot was a righteous man who was trying to do what was right. But he was living in “sin city” (Sodom). That unrighteous city oppressed and tormented his righteous soul. What does Peter want us to remember? If you live in an environment where sin is rampant, it will oppress and torment us. In 2 Corinthians 6:17-18 God said,

“‘Come out from among them and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

Paul said that we are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather are to expose them. He later said in 1 Corinthians 15:33 that “evil companions corrupt good morals.” Are we saying to you today that you do not have to live in the world? Of course not. All of us have to live in the world. But we do not have to surround ourselves with sin. We do not have to have as our closest friends and companions ungodly, immoral people. If we surround ourselves with those types of people, and if they are the only kind of people we have around us, how can we be the kind of people God wants us to be? If we are running around with ungodly people, and they are our closest friends, they eventually will rub off on us. We must remember that if get ourselves into a sinful environment, it will oppress our righteous souls and wreak havoc on us.

In 2 Peter 2:9-10 we learn that even though Lot was in an ungodly area, God knew how to deliver the godly out of that and punish the ungodly.

“The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.”

God knows how to deliver the righteous out of those things. How will God do that? There is a day coming when the Lord will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who know not God and those who have not obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be punished with everlasting fire. The Bible says that God will destroy the unrighteous. But in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14,17 we learn that we are not to weep with sorrow as those who have no hope, for “if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus..... We shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” Ultimately God will punish the ungodly and will bring the righteous up to Him. But in a physical, worldly sense here and now, does not God also today know how to deliver the godly? In 1 Corinthians 10:13 we are taught,

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

Our God knows how to deliver us ultimately. And He knows how to deliver us in the here and now. What does that mean for us? We must trust Him. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not on your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5). We must seek God’s will to see if we are letting Him deliver us by His teaching. Ultimately, we must be faithful so that when the great day of deliverance comes, we will be ready.

What is the main problem with false teachers? Peter reminds us that the main problem with false teachers is their absolute disregard for authority of any kind—except their own. In 2 Peter 2:10-11 we read, “They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.” What is the problem with false teachers? They have an absolute disregard for the authority of Scripture, and for anyone’s authority except theirs. False teachers have a pride problem. They want to have the preeminence, when, in fact, it belongs only to Jesus (Col. 1:18). They have yet to realize that Jesus has **all** authority (Mt. 28:18). We are not to add to or take away from the Word of God (Rev. 22:18-19). We are not to go beyond what is written (1 Cor. 4:6). And we must speak only as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). We must realize that false teachers have a problem with authority. We must submit to God’s authority. Here is the best advice that I could ever give you. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee mentioned in John 2, the host had run out of wine. Jesus’ mother asked Him to provide more wine by performing a miracle. Jesus said that His hour had not yet come. But He agreed to create more wine. Jesus’ mother then turns and says to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it” (vs. 5). We need to have the mindset that whatever Jesus says is what we will do. We are not the authority, and we do not make the decisions. We are to follow Christ because He is our Leader. We need to have the mindset that whatever Jesus says, we are going to do it because He is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22-23). He has all authority (Mt. 28:18). And it is His Word, not the word of men, that will judge us at the last day (Jn. 12:48).

If we give in to false teaching, false living, and false practices, it will be worse for us as children of God to be lost than it will be for someone who never heard the truth. Notice 2 Peter 2:20-22.

“If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’”

It is clear from the context that these people had obeyed the Gospel and were Christians. They had “escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” They came out of the world. They got the stain of sin removed from them. Then they got entangled in sin again. What will it be like for such people? The Bible says that their latter part will be worse than their beginning, and that it would be better for them not to have known the way of truth. How will it be worse for them? If someone never hears the Gospel and goes to Hell, and if someone obeys the Gospel but falls away, how will it be worse for the latter person? Both will have the same punishment—Hell fire. But it will be worse for the latter person because he knew the way of truth but gave it up. That person will sit in the halls of Hell, knowing for all eternity that he was a child of God, but gave that up. He held the pearl of great price in his hand, and knew what it was like to be saved. But he gave it up. It will be worse for that person because he knows the goodness of God and salvation. He knows that every good and perfect gift comes from above—from the Father of lights with Whom there is no shadow or variation of turning. It will be worse for that person because to go back into sin he has to sear his conscience (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

There is a practical principle to be learned here. A child of God can so sin as to be lost and perish in Hell. If there was ever a passage that teaches this principle, this is it. These people had escaped the pollutions of the world, but had gotten entangled in them again. Their latter end, then, was worse than their beginning. How can that be the case if such people never were children of God? And what is their last state like? Look at the disgusting nature of it. It is like a dog returning to its own vomit. You might say, “That is disgusting!” Absolutely it is—when a child of God turns from the holy way and returns to sin. It is like a sow, having washed, returning to wallow in the mire. That is dirty. Absolutely it is! It is dirty when a clean child of God leaves the way of righteousness and goes toward the path of filthiness. A child of God can sin so as to be lost if he gets caught up in false teaching. Thus, it is very important for us to realize that there are false teachers. There are scoffers. There are those who always claim that they have some “new truth” or have figured out something that the Bible has always taught, yet we are able to know it now only with their help. We need to be reminded of the same old truths—the truths that we heard from the Bible all our lives. Those are the things that will get us to Heaven. And that is what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:1-2.

“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”

The same truths that the prophets spoke, that Jesus taught, and that the apostles taught, are the things that we need to hear, and by which we need to live our lives today. No new-fangled idea is going to come along and bring great light to everyone. People have always looked for such a thing. But the same truths we hear today are the same truths that people will need to hear a thousand years from now. Jeremiah 10:23 teaches us that “it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” People always have tried to do things their way. But God’s way is the only way that will save us. Jeremiah cried out, “Stand in the way and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is. There you will find rest for your souls.” But the people did not want the old paths. They said, “We will not walk in them!” So many today have that same mindset.

What particular doctrine is it that Peter wants to deal with? There were certain scoffers who were saying that the claims of the Lord were not true. The text of 2 Peter 3:1-7 deals with the Second Coming of Christ. Some were saying, “The Lord said He was coming back, but that coming hasn’t happened. Everything remains the same as it was from day one of cre-

ation, and nothing is different.” Peter said that that was not true. There have been some major catastrophic changes since the moment of creation. Changes took place after God said, “Let there be light.” There were multitudes of changes that took place after that (even in creation itself, as Peter points out in verse 5). Then Peter mentions the global flood (vs. 6), which was a major catastrophic change that happened after the creation. That same word of God that set in motion both of these events is what will set in motion the Second Coming of Christ. It is not that God is slow concerning His promises. It is not that there is no proof. Peter gave them all the proof they needed. God said it; that settles it. That is the proof. In Matthew 24:24-26 Jesus said that Heaven and Earth would pass away, but His words would never pass away. He also said that no man knows the day or the hour of the Lord’s Second Coming. The problem that many people have with the Second Coming of Christ is **time**. But although time is precious to us, and although we cannot live our lives without it, we must remember that God is not bound by time. To the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day. God is not bound by time. He does not have a clock that ticks sixty seconds in a minute, sixty minutes in an hour, and twenty-four hours in a day. God is not bound by time. If we say, “God said His Son is coming, and we have been here so many years since then, then what’s wrong? Is God’s clock broken? Is God’s calendar not working?,” then we have forgotten that God is not bound by time. Time was created for man. God does things on His time schedule, not on ours. We do not know when the Lord will return. Thank goodness we do not because many of us probably would wait until the very end to get right with God.

But here is what we **do** know. The Lord is not slow concerning His promises. The Lord is longsuffering. In 2 Peter 3:9 Peter says that the problem is not one of time, but rather of the importance of souls: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” What is one of the things on which God is waiting? God loves lost souls enough that He is giving them time to get right. God wants all people to repent and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). The moment Christ comes back, there will be no more time for repentance. God does not want anyone to go to Hell, and is giving men and women ample time to get ready. Instead of scoffing, the scoffers should have been saying, “Thank You God, for giving us the time to learn how to repent and to get ready for Your coming.” God is not slow; God is longsuffering. He cares enough about people that He is giving them time to get their lives ready.

We do learn certain things about the nature of the Lord’s Second Coming and what it will be like. In 2 Peter 3:10-12 Peter said,

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?”

What will it be like when Christ returns? He will come like a thief in the night. What does that mean? It means that it will be quick and sudden—when we are not expecting it. What else will happen? The heavens will pass away with a great noise. The elements (the Earth and its works) will be burned up with tremendous heat. The heavens will be dissolved. The righteous will meet Christ in the air (1 Thess. 4). All who are in the grave will come forth (Jn. 5:28-29). And the bodies that we now possess will be changed (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:55ff.). All these things will take place in the twinkling of an eye. We must be ready. That is the truth. The application of that truth is found in verse 11 where Peter said that since Christ is coming, we need to live holy lives. Peter asked, “What manner of persons

ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” His point was that this was the way people ought to live their lives because Christ was going to return! “Without holiness, no one will see God” (Heb. 12:14). The Bible says, “Be holy, as He who called you is holy” (1 Pet. 1:15). Jesus said, “Watch and be ready, for you know not the hour when the Lord comes” (Mk. 13:35). Thus, we look forward to that new heaven and new earth spoken of in Revelation 21:1-4 where there will be no more sorrow, death, crying, or tears, because all the former things will have passed away. It is spoken of as a city whose Builder and Maker is God (Heb. 11:10; 2 Cor. 5:1-2). The Second Coming of Christ is not something that should give us trouble. It is not something into which the matter of time should even be brought. Rather, it is something that we ought to anticipate, and to which we should look forward. Paul said, “I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). In Colossians 3:1 Paul said “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” Jesus is still coming! The Second Coming is a biblical idea. From Hebrews 9:27-28 we learn that Jesus will come a second time apart from sin, and for salvation. The first time Jesus came was to deal with sin. The second time He comes will be to save those who have stayed true to His cause, and to destroy those (2 Thess. 1:7-8) who have not lived faithful lives.

In view of the fact that false teachers **do** exist, and that the Lord **will** return, I want to ask you if you are ready for the Second Coming of Christ. Have you allowed false teaching to cause you to go astray? Are you sure today that you are right with God? Are you sure you have done what the Bible says to be saved, and not what men taught you to do. Here is what God said that a person must do in order to be saved.

In Acts 8 the Ethiopian eunuch was traveling down the road. The Spirit told Philip to overtake him. The eunuch was reading the Scriptures, and Philip said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” A person must read and understand the Scriptures in order to be saved. The eunuch said, “How can I except some man teach me?” Philip taught the eunuch to believe in Jesus (Jn. 8:24). He no doubt taught him about repentance, which is key to our salvation. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Philip and the eunuch came to a certain water. The eunuch said, “What hinders me from being baptized?” Then the eunuch made the good confession—“I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Acts 8:37). Then both Philip and the eunuch got down out of the chariot, went down into the water, and Philip baptized the eunuch, who came up out of the water saved. To be saved, a person must be baptized in water. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” If you are not a child of God, you desperately need to become one. We have no knowledge of when Christ will come back. Therefore, we must make sure we are ready.

Those of us who are Christians, and who thus are members of the body of Christ, must not be ignorant. We must not act like everyone out there is teaching the truth and everyone who stands in the pulpit must be a god. Let’s check the Scriptures to see. Let’s have the attitude of the Bereans who received the Word of God with readiness of mind, and then searched the Scriptures to see if what they were being taught was correct. Let’s stand up against false teaching, contend for the faith, and live holy lives in view of the Second Coming. There is nothing greater in all the world than being a Christian and being ready for the great day of Jesus’ Second Coming. Are you ready? Are you sure you’re ready? Have you obeyed the Gospel? Is your faith built on the Gospel of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? If not, won’t you make it right today? We love you, and want you to go to Heaven. Won’t you obey the Gospel of Christ?

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## **STUDY QUESTIONS FOR 1 & 2 PETER LESSON 4 (2 PETER CHAPTERS 2-3)**

1. In 2 Peter 2:1, Peter issued a warning to the Christians to whom he was writing. What was the specific subject matter of that warning?
2. What warning did Jesus issue in Matthew 7:15?
3. In 1 Timothy 1:18-20 Paul mentioned two men who had “made shipwreck of the faith.” Who were those two men?
4. In 1 John 4:1, what did John tell Christians to do?
5. What does 1 Thessalonians 5:21 admonish Christians to do?
6. According to 2 Peter 2:7-8, while Lot lived in Sodom, how did he feel?
7. What command did God issue in 2 Corinthians 6:17-18?
8. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, what did Paul say about “evil companions”?
9. Two things are mentioned in 2 Peter 2:9-10 that God knows how to do. What are they?
10. What important message for Christians is contained in 1 Corinthians 10:13?
11. What important advice is contained in Proverbs 3:5?
12. While certain false teachers may desire to have the preeminence, it does not belong to them. According to Colossians 1:18, to whom does the preeminence belong?
13. In John 2:5, what advice (which is still applicable to us today) did Jesus’ mother give a group of servants?
14. According to John 12:48, what will judge us in “the last day”?
15. According to Matthew 28:18, who has “all authority”?
16. Who was Peter discussing in 2 Peter 2:20-22?
17. In 2 Peter 3:1-2, of what did Peter tell Christians to be mindful?
18. What important point does Jeremiah 10:23 teach?
19. In 2 Peter 3:11, what important question did Peter ask?
20. At the end of 2 Peter 3:11, what answers did Peter provide for the question he asked in that same verse?
21. With what specific subject matter does 2 Peter 3:1-7 deal?
22. According to 2 Thessalonians 1:7, what will Christ give Christians when He returns?