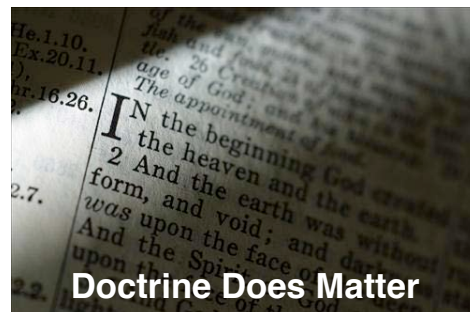


A STUDY OF 2 PETER

False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Persecution from outside the church can be difficult, but false teaching from inside is even more destructive. Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, unleashes the harshest of words to describe those who desire to deceive the followers of Christ. In the previous chapter, Peter wrote about the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture. It is through understanding and adhering to the Scriptures that Christians are enabled to identify and resist falsehood.



We must acknowledge that false teachers are present in the world and within the church. In verses 1-3 we learn these facts about the false teachers in Peter's day:

1. False teachers are nothing new. They were around in Old Testament times and they are present in New Testament times.
2. They were in the midst of the church (among you).
3. They work secretly.
4. Their teachings are destructive.
5. Their teachings are heretical. (Heresies are teachings that are false.)
6. They deny the Master. (We are not sure how they are denying the Master. It may have been that they denied the Second Coming or some aspect of the behaviour that Christ desires.)
7. They bring upon themselves swift destruction. (Their destruction would come either at their own death or at the Second Coming when they would be eternally condemned.)
8. Their teaching is sensual. (A part of their heretical teaching or lifestyle was immoral.)
9. They bring blasphemy on their way of truth.
10. They are greedy.
11. They exploited Christians.
12. They are liars.
13. They will be condemned and destroyed.

Peter clearly points out the danger, methodology, and motivation of the false teachers along with their bleak and certain future.

1. Why does Peter write so strongly about the false teachers?
2. What methods does Peter say the false teachers use to entice their victims?
3. What was the motivation of the false teachers?
4. How and why might the false teachers have been secretive?
5. How would the false teachers have been destructive?
6. Why would the way of truth be blasphemed because of the false teachers?
7. What will be the ultimate outcome of the false teachers?

Old Testament Examples (2 Peter 2:4-11)

The problem with false teachers is so severe that Peter continues to describe the surety of their destruction with examples of God's judgement in the Old Testament.

First, there are the "*angels who sinned.*" We can assume that this refers to angels who rebelled with Satan against God and the same group that is also mentioned in Jude 6. Those angels who defied the will of God were cast into "*hell.*" The phrase "cast them into hell" is the Greek word *tartaros*. This is the only New Testament reference to Tartarus, described as a place of chains and darkness prior to final judgment.

The second example of God's judgment comes from those in Noah's day who perished in the flood which encompassed the globe. Only eight people; Noah and his family were spared by God. Noah is described as righteous while the world was ungodly.



The third example of God's judgment is that of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah which were destroyed because of their immorality. These cities serve as an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. Lot stands in stark contrast to the sinful lifestyle of those around him. He was righteous and God spared him, even while he exacted judgment on those who were sinful.

8. Describe the distress and torment of Lot.

9. What are the four “if” statements in verses 4-10 and what is the one “then” statement and what do these mean for the Christian?

10. Which two characters in verses 4-10 show that God is able to deliver the godly from trials? How long did they endure before their deliverance?

The sinful angels, those who perished in the days of Noah, and the wicked men of Sodom and Gomorrah are under punishment now while their eternal condemnation awaits the final judgment.

The false teachers in Peter’s day await the same judgement as the wicked in Old Testament times. These teachers 1) Indulge in the lust of defiling passion; 2) Despise authority; 3) are bold and willful; 4) they blaspheme the glorious ones without fear.

The lust of defiling passion suggests homosexuality which may be why Peter references the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. These men were teaching that Christians should follow their own desires. Lust is a strong desire while defiling passion is pollution.¹

They despise the authority and Lordship of Christ. Verse 1 said that they denied the Master who bought them. We can assume they would have also despised the authority of the apostles and from what Peter wrote in the latter verses of chapter one, along with their immoral lifestyle and false doctrine, it is reasonable to conclude that they despised the authority of Scripture.

To be bold and willful is to say that they were arrogant, self-willed, proud, and lived to please self.

The blasphemy of the glorious ones is probably a reference to slandering the evil angels. According to verse 11, even the angels, “*though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.*” (See also Jude 9 where the archangel Michael did not even blaspheme the devil.)

So what are the main points we can take away from this study?

1. There have always been false teachers and they are still with us.
2. False teachers have impure motives and will try to exploit through secret and deceptive means.
3. False teachers stand condemned and await punishment.
4. God will punish evil and reward righteousness.
5. There may be a time of pain while the injustice of false teaching is present.

¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com, 2010. p. 142.