



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

2 PETER

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 2 Peter heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/2Peter (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

GROW IN GRACE



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Peter 1:1-8**



Listen at [TTB.org/2Peter](https://www.TTB.org/2Peter) to **2 Peter Intro—1:1**, **2 Peter 1:1-4**, and **2 Peter 1:4-6**

In a final letter, written shortly before he is crucified, Peter the apostle warns the young church about a storm on the horizon. He wants to give their faith an anchor in Scripture, their only defense against the coming apostasy. *“You will not be able to live for God in these days of apostasy unless you have a knowledge of the Word of God,”* he says in essence. *“You need to know not just about God but also about His Word. Then you’ll have a place to stand and a steady foundation to your Christian character.”*

The Christian life is more than just being born again—it’s also about growing up in Christ. The last verse of the entire letter sums it up well: “But grow in the grace” We do not only need to *stand fast* in grace (his closing challenge from the first letter), but we also need to *keep growing* in it.

Peter, who identified himself as a bondservant and just one of the apostles (that’s his authority) wrote this second letter in 66 A.D., shortly after his first letter. The Lord Jesus had ascended back to heaven three decades before. In these 30 years, a sneaky heresy had slipped in the church called Gnosticism that said some had a secret about Jesus no one else had. Maybe it was a secret password or handshake, but you had to get on the inside in order to find out. Peter rebuffed all that and said real knowledge is to know Jesus Christ.

Peter writes to those who “have obtained like precious faith with us.” When he uses the word “faith,” he means the gospel, the body of truth. He is saying, “*You have received it, now it’s up to you what you do with it.*”

If you are not a believer today, don’t say it’s because you have mental reservations. The truth is, you have some *sinful* reservations. When your heart turns to the Lord, then He will lift the veil. Anytime you are ready, God is ready, and He will save you. God doesn’t want anyone to perish. Today it is “*whoever* desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17) and “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). All He asks you to do is believe. He doesn’t even ask you to clean up before you come to Him. He’ll clean you up later if you really mean business with Him.

When Jesus Christ saves you, He not only subtracts your sin, He also adds His own righteousness to your account.

Peter blesses his readers with “grace and peace be multiplied.” Notice this is always the order: First, we know the grace of God—that God has saved us, not through our merit, our character, or anything in us, but He has saved us because of our faith in Christ. Because He loved us enough to die for us on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins, it is possible for Him to reach down and save us. Once we experience God’s grace, then we can experience God’s peace (see Romans 5:1). And notice one is not added to the other—it is multiplied!

How does this spiritual mathematics take place? Through “the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Christianity is a Person. We are not only to believe in Jesus Christ but we also want to *know* Him (see also Philippians 3:10). He is the living Savior who right at this moment is at God’s right hand. This knowledge of Jesus Christ comes through a knowledge of the Word of God, the *sure* Word of God. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and makes them real to us. You can know Jesus Christ better than you can know your closest loved one. You can tell Him things you would not dare tell anyone. The important thing is that to know Him is eternal life (see John 17:3).

To know Him in this way, we first have to be born again (see 1 Peter 1:23). Then His divine power gives us everything we need to live life to the full. He makes every arrangement for you to live a godly life for Him. It’s only through the knowledge of Christ that you can really learn to live here and now and grow to be a more godly person. Only by knowing Jesus Christ in every way possible can we be “called ... by glory,” meaning we

are growing to be like Him in every way, with all excellence. The way you'll have the courage to excel in life is through knowing more and more about Jesus Christ.

Peter loved the word “precious.” He’s talked about our precious faith, now he talks about the precious promises God has given to us (promises like John 6:37, Matthew 11:28, John 14:6, 1 John 5:12, and 1 Peter 1:23). Wonderful promises come wrapped in knowing and believing Jesus Christ and by faith in Him.

When you become a child of God, you are given God’s nature. Don’t let anybody deceive you into thinking the Christian life is a series of do’s and don’t’s—it’s so much more. You are a partaker of the divine nature, and you *want* the things of God. You better understand the things of God. You have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

What more could we ever need or want? But Peter says, *“If you get that far, you’ve only started. There’s so much more beyond salvation.”*

Your salvation is delivered to you in three tenses. In the past, you were saved. Today, you are being saved. In the future, you will be saved. You are not yet like the Lord Jesus, but you are in the process of becoming like Him. This is beautiful, serious business. Either you are growing or you’re dying.

When you grow up in Christ, your life is characterized by certain attributes. To your faith, add these graces as you grow:

- **“Add to your faith virtue”** To those living in the Roman world of the first century, virtue characterized the very finest of Roman character. Strength, valor, courage, and excellence—these same qualities should characterize our lives. The world needs believers with the courage to stand for that which is right.
- **“Add to ... virtue, knowledge”** Here the Greek word for “knowledge” is *gnosis*, meaning “to know God in His salvation.” As you study the Word of God and share it with others, the Spirit of God confirms it to your heart, and you will grow deeper and more mature in your spiritual life.
- **“Add ... to knowledge self-control”** As believers, we are to be in full mastery of our bodies, minds, and passions.
- **“Add ... to self-control perseverance”** Patience is being able to endure when trials come. Patience builds upon knowledge and courage. Like a growing tree, a Christian should be developing courage, then knowledge, then self-control, and then endurance.

- **“Add ... to perseverance godliness”** After you have been born into the family of God, you want to be like our Father. And He will never disappoint us. He is not only our hero, He is our God, the one we worship and praise. The word “godliness” has built in it that thought of praise and worship of God; it speaks of a dependence upon God and a life devoted to Him.
- **“Add ... to godliness brotherly kindness”** We are to love other believers.
- **“Add ... to brotherly kindness love.”** We are to love those who don’t yet know the Lord—to love the sinner as God loves him. We are to love them by bringing them the gospel and care for their souls.

If these attributes are a part of your character and life, Peter says you will be fruitful. He’s talking not about external rituals or religion or liturgy but what is inside the Christian. “If these things are yours and *abound*” Here Peter starts multiplying again (he’s great with mathematics). These characteristics are evidence of God’s Spirit producing His fruit in your life. For this to happen, you can’t be sitting on the sidelines. You’ve got to be involved in your Christian life: Yield yourself over to Him, present your body to Him, and draw from the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, the fruit of the Spirit. Again, the fruit is: Faith, courage, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, love of the brethren, and love for the unsaved. He doesn’t want us to be barren, but loves it when we’re fruitful.

NEXT: The foundation on which our faith rests.

7. Imagine being a companion of Peter's. Would it surprise you to see someone coming to the end of his life talking about the importance of knowledge, virtue, and kindness?

LESSON 2

OUR SURE FOUNDATION



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Peter 1:9-21**



Listen at [TTB.org/2Peter](https://www.TTB.org/2Peter) to **2 Peter 1:7-14**, **2 Peter 1:13-19**, and **2 Peter 1:19—2:1**

In our last study, Peter challenged believers to stay on a path of maturity. “Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (1:5-7).

These characteristics are all proof of God at work in your life.

Many people in the church lack these things in their lives. It’s tragic so many live in sterility, considering all vibrancy of fruitfulness that is available to them in Christ. Sometimes their lack of enthusiasm will lead them to wonder if they are really even saved (see 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 and 2 Corinthians 13:5). It’s a worthy question. If you have no interest in spiritual things, examine yourself to make sure you are in the faith. You can’t knowingly live a careless life and still be a Christian. These are important issues and Peter feels compelled to remind them of it.

“Make your call and election sure”—he means, of course, *more* sure. In other words, the security of the believer is objective; it can’t be disputed. If you are a child of God, then nothing will change that. However, your assurance can be disturbed by the life you live. If you don’t operate in sincerity and truth, you’re bound to wonder if you really have been born

again. While it is true that Christ has done everything necessary to save you and keep you saved, to be meaningful your Christian life must be worked at and developed.

If you lack a solid foundation under you, then you might doubt your salvation, which opens you up to easily get entangled in sin. This is all the more reason to get serious about learning the Word of God.

Peter's urgency in addressing such things is because he knows his time is short. He knows he's approaching the end of his time on earth. "... Shortly I must put off my tent (my body)." The word for "tent" means "a dwelling place" (see also 2 Corinthians 5:1 where the apostle Paul calls our body our collapsing tent).

Peter's focus is no longer on earth, since he knows he won't see the Rapture. The Lord Himself told him he would die a martyr's death. Instead, he focuses on the coming of Christ to establish His everlasting Kingdom on this earth.

Knowing that he wouldn't be with them very much longer, Peter felt called to stir up these saints to grow in grace, so as not to allow spiritual senility to set in. As long as he had life, Peter was going to remind them of these important things. He wanted them to remember this "after my decease," which means his "exodus." Peter would soon be moving out of his house, his tent, down here; he will be taking it off as if it was a coat, and he will be making his exodus. The word "exodus" implies death doesn't end it all; it is just an exit.

So in light of his approaching death, Peter wants us to remember certain things—beginning with the trustworthiness of the Word of God. We have an authority on which we can depend. "How do we know the Bible is really the Word of God?" Peter addresses that: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty."

The Bible is not a pack of lies nor is it a fairy tale or a myth. It is historical and factual. If you study it sincerely, God will make it real to you. If there is a veil over your eyes, it isn't because you are mentally blind but because you don't want to give up your sins. When you're willing to do that, God will make the Bible real to you.

"But were eyewitnesses of His majesty." Remember that this Peter writing is the same Peter who stood with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter saw His majesty.

God's Word is like a light shining from a dark place—it's a certain word of truth, Peter says, because it's the spoken Word of God. The prophets, as he makes clear in the next verse, were more than amanuenses who took dictation from God; rather, they expressed their own feelings and thoughts. Nevertheless, God was able to transmit His complete will and word through the men who wrote Scripture. This is what makes it a miraculous book. The Word of God is not only divine; it is human, very human.

The Lord Jesus is both God and man. And the Bible is both a God-book and a man-book. It deals with human life, right down where we live and move and have our being, yet it is God speaking to man in a language that is understandable to us.

Many people think, "I wish I could have been with Peter and seen those things." But truth be told, we have something even better. We have the whole Word of God. It will speak directly to you if you will open your heart and allow it to speak. The Word of God is better than seeing and hearing.

As the sun gives out its light, throwing it out to the universe, so the Word of God sends out a light, a force, and a power. It is the only tangible supernatural thing we have in this world today. The Word of God is the only physical miracle that we have from God in this hour, drawing men away from the world system and putting them into the arms of God. He teaches us the truth of His Word through the Holy Spirit who makes them real to us.

The Bible has a whole message, with collaborating messages. No portion can be interpreted apart from other verses on the same subject. (This is why you shouldn't pull a verse of Scripture out of context and build a doctrine on it. If you can't get the whole body of Scripture to confirm your doctrine, then get a new doctrine.) The human writers of Scripture didn't just think up what they wanted to say. They were "moved" by the Holy Spirit, which means "moved along like a sailing vessel is moved by the wind." That's the way the Holy Spirit inspired these men who were set apart by God to be His instruments in writing Scripture. They were moved along by the Spirit of God. This is the same thought as what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" God took each writer and used him, without changing his style or interfering with his personality, to write His Word so that His message comes across. If God spoke out of heaven today, He would have to repeat Himself, because He already has said all that He has to say to mankind. God has gotten His Word to us through men of different personalities and different skills. For this reason this is a man-book and a God-book.

The written Word, like the Lord Jesus, the living Word, is both human and divine. The Lord Jesus could weep at a grave, but He could also raise the dead. He could sit down at a well because He was tired and thirsty, but He could also give the water of life to a poor sinner. He could go to sleep in a boat, but He could also still the storm. He was a man, but He was God also. And the Bible is both human and divine.

Peter tells us we have “the prophetic word confirmed.” It’s a solid rock under our feet. We can have confidence that it is true and trustworthy. No wonder the Word of God has been attacked more than anything else. If the enemy can get rid of the foundation, he knows the building will come crashing down.

The Bible is a solid foundation on which we can rest our faith.

NEXT: Peter calls out false teachers.

7. The pressure to lose faith in God's Word is real today, but it was just as real for the Jewish Christians of the first century. What pressures can you imagine were on the early church to abandon the faith?

The Christian life

IS MORE THAN JUST BEING

BORN AGAIN—IT'S ALSO ABOUT

growing up in Christ.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 3

CLOUDS WITHOUT RAIN



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Peter 2**



Listen at [TTB.org/2Peter](https://www.TTB.org/2Peter) to **2 Peter 2:1-3**, **2 Peter 2:3-6**, **2 Peter 2:5-9**, **2 Peter 2:9-20**, and **2 Peter 2:21, 22**

We learn in 2 John 2 how the centrifugal force of the light of Jesus Christ draws people away from the world and toward God. But there's also the centripetal force—the gravitational force that pulls the world away from the Word of God.

In the Old Testament, false prophets pulled people away from God, but today, it's false teachers who put us in danger. A false teacher knows the truth but deliberately lies for some other purpose, perhaps for money or a selfish reason or to please people. Many teachers today say what people want them to say, although they know the truth is something different. They teach error deliberately, usually denying Jesus Christ's work of redemption. They claim to be Christians, even act as members of the church, but they will work secretly under a cover of hypocrisy.

Some teachers teach error ignorantly. They believe what they are teaching, even when it's false. But a false teacher does it deliberately. You need to check all teachers by the Word of God. You can rest on Scripture to reveal a false teacher.

Some false teachers teach some true doctrine. Cults usually have some truth in them, making them 10,000 times more dangerous than if they were 100 percent in error. These teachers generally believe some things that are true. They come to the church “in sheep’s clothing,” our Lord said, “but inwardly they are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15; also see Acts 20:29). These wolves in sheep’s clothing will absolutely destroy the flock and scatter them.

Sadly, a lot of false teaching goes out under the guise of being the Word of God. False followers will go after false teachers. Some “followers” are only looking for someone to preach what they believe, and so they are willingly deceived. God’s elect can be among them, but their deception won’t be permanent. The Lord Jesus said, “*My sheep hear My voice, and they will not follow a false shepherd*” (see John 10:27).

A false shepherd will use “deceptive words”—the same word as “plastic,” able to be molded into every possible shape. Plastic preachers can be shaped by the people they serve, saying only what their congregations wants to hear. They will fit their words to their audience. They speak one thing to one crowd and then talk differently to another crowd. Why would they do that? Peter puts it right on the table here: “by covetousness.” They do it because they are covetous, some for a position, for a name, for popularity, many for money.

God will also take care of these false teachers someday. It may appear that He’s not doing much today, but He’s aware and won’t let this go unaddressed.

In the past, there have been apostates. First there were angels who sinned (2:4), a clear example of how the *devil* works. The second example is the people of Noah’s day, an example of the *world system against God*. And the third example is the turning of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, and that is the example of the *flesh*. We have here the devil, the world, and the flesh—the three enemies we need to be aware of. We shouldn’t be ignorant of Satan’s devices, but we shouldn’t pay too much attention to him either. Before man was put on this earth, God judged the angels who joined with Satan in a rebellion against Him. He’s got this.

When God imprisoned the angels, He “cast them down to hell,” which is not hell as we think of it. Hell hasn’t been opened up to do business yet and won’t be until much later. The devil is not in hell; he is abroad in God’s creation. According to the book of Job, Satan is allowed entrance into God’s presence. He is like a roaring lion, going up and down this earth, seeking whom he may devour. Although Satan is not in hell, some of his angels

have already been incarcerated, some in pits of darkness, waiting for their judgment. God has already declared a guilty indictment against them, and they're waiting for their judgment to come. After Noah's day, God laid down the godly principle of discipline from a government, intended to preserve a nation from the nasty things that come out of the human heart. Apart from God, man is nothing in the world but an animal. *God* is the one who gives values; *God* creates moral standards. None of them are inherent in us.

In chapter 3, Peter talks about three worlds—the world that was, the world that is, and the world that is to come. God “did not spare the ancient world,” that is, the world before Noah. God brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly. These people were religious; they simply left the living and true God out of their religion. They lived as if God didn't exist at all. They were lawless and violent, and God moved in. In His judgment God had in mind the future that was coming, and His judgment reveals His care and respect for the human life He had created.

Peter then recounts how God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, whose citizens were given over to sodomy, homosexuality which perverts sex for a purpose contrary to what God created and intended it for (see Genesis 1:28 and 2:24). Our old nature expresses itself in wicked behavior. The flesh is an ugly thing. Making it lawful somehow doesn't add dignity to it. God has said that when people go down that low, the “due penalty” they experience as a result is God giving them over and letting them indulge in sinful desires. Sexual perversion is its own inevitable penalty. You can take or leave this conclusion, but that's what the Word of God says (see Romans 1:18-32).

Some walk after the flesh, lower than animals, and delight in that which is vulgar, vile, and vicious. They despise the way God is running His universe and so will do their own thing. They ask God to damn everything under the sun. They speak evil of that which is sacred. It follows that these people also freely take God's name in vain. They don't take the city's name in vain or their boss's name in vain or the name of some person they hate. But they take God's name in vain. Some false teachers are not afraid to speak evil of dignities, of glories, of how God orders things. They are so lifted up with pride, that they do what even angels don't dare to do.

Let's learn from this evil example. Instead of falling into this same spirit manifested today in our world, let's keep a spirit of humility always in front of us, since it's pride that causes people to speak as they do. We can turn over this evil to God.

Those corrupted by the world will perish in their own corruption. Some of these might have escaped some pollutions of the world. In other words, many lost sinners refuse to do some sins, but they can't escape being corrupted by the world. On the outside he may be religious (he goes through forms, he does certain works), but his heart is still corrupt and not right with God at all. And other than turning to Jesus Christ by faith, he can do nothing whatsoever about that. When a man thinks wrong, he will act wrong—you just cannot escape that fact. Peter calls out false teachers without sympathy. These people are evil, and God will judge them someday. Peter reminds them from the Old Testament that God called out Balaam for his covetousness and for doing religious work for personal profit.

These false teachers are like “wells without water” and beautiful clouds without rain. It might be thrilling to see and hear them perform on stage, but there is no water in the well and there is no rain in the clouds. People are thirsting today for the Word of God, and yet are denied the life-saving water. The false teachers preach a religion that appeals to the senses but can't be depended upon. “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption.” They don't really know what freedom is themselves. They might have a head knowledge of Christ, they acknowledge the truth, but they don't love it. They reject what they once professed and become enslaved in corruption.

Peter deals very specifically with the apostasy that was coming into the church through false teachers who were creeping in and teaching false doctrine contrary to God's Word. They pervert God's truth for their own advantage. They exalt themselves rather than lifting up Jesus Christ. They tack on the Word of God to their own message and only use it for a few little proof texts. They use big, counterfeit words to impress people and claim they can change people. One day God will expose them in judgment. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to then turn from the gospel.

Don't even try to fight these false teachers but expose them as you walk in truth.

NEXT: Peter reveals three worlds in one.

7. There were false teachers in Peter's time, just like in our time. If you could go back in time to see the false teachers Peter was battling, how do you think they would compare to the false teachers in our world today?

LESSON 4

SINCE YOU KNOW THESE THINGS ...



Begin with prayer



Read **2 Peter 3**



Listen at TTB.org/2Peter to **2 Peter 3:1-7, 13, 2 Peter 3:5-10**, and **2 Peter 3:8-18**

“I want you to remember something”

Because it’s so easy to forget what we learn about God in His Word, Peter reminds us as he wraps up his second letter, *“Remember the Old Testament writers,”* he says. Remember that in the last days scoffers will dominate the scene. Look around; you’ll see them everywhere in the days we’re living now.

Apparently, many scoffers will be church members and many of them pastors. They will walk “according to their own lusts,” not even attempting to follow the Word of God. Their problem is not intellectual; their problem is heart trouble. And so they will teach a false argument. They’ll doubt the promise of Jesus’ return. They’ll say, “Well, where is He?” They’ll scoff at the hope we hold. People on the street will deny the Lord’s return, and even those in the pulpit will deny it.

In the Old Testament, the prophecy surrounding the Lord’s return was that the Messiah would establish His kingdom on the earth; the New Testament prophecy about His coming was first to take His church out of the world and *then* to come to establish His kingdom upon the earth (see John 14:2-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17). The Lord Jesus Himself was the first to reveal He would be coming for His own.

The scoffers will point to history and say, “Look! Nothing’s changed!” Their laid-back attitude thinks things have been fine so far, so let’s just go with it. Peter will say, *“That’s where you’re absolutely wrong. If you think nothing has happened in the past, let me tell you about it!”*

A PAST WORLD

Peter looks back and presents a three-in-one world.

First, there was a world when people willingly forgot (vv. 5-6). They intentionally forgot that once our world overflowed with water and everyone perished. Besides Noah and his family, the world of people and animals disappeared.

By the way, there is abundant evidence for this worldwide flood. Archaeologists discovered at the site of ancient Ur of the Chaldees that a great deal of sand and silt was deposited there by a flood. Then beneath all this, they discovered the remains of a very high civilization. No matter the evidence that some great cataclysm did take place, things have not continued as they were from the beginning of the creation.

A PRESENT WORLD

Peter then presents the world that *is*—we live in this world (vs. 7). Our world is “preserved by the same word [God’s Word] ... reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

This earth has been stored up for fire. This is a very interesting expression that not only means stored up *for* fire but also stored up *with* fire. Resident forces present now in the world can destroy it. This earth carries its own judgment. We are living on a powder keg—or, more literally, on an atom bomb. There will never be another flood to destroy the world, because God promised that judgment is past. Now the present world is reserved for another judgment, the judgment of fire. In other words, this present order of things in this world is temporary, moving toward another judgment. We who believe the Bible have this clear statement concerning the judgment that is coming on this world and the way in which it is to be destroyed. We should be alert. To us, this passage in 2 Peter makes good sense. It’s not only logical how God can destroy this universe but it’s scientific.

But God isn’t in a hurry to judge. “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” This judgment on the earth and heavens will take place during the Day of the Lord, which will happen in

sync with the Lord Jesus' return to the earth at the end of the Tribulation and when He establishes His kingdom here. Even if the Rapture should take place tomorrow, it still would be 1,007 years before this destruction.

Why wait? Because God is longsuffering; He is patient; He's not rushing things. After all, He has eternity behind Him and eternity ahead of Him. He doesn't worry about time. But be sure, the dissolution of the earth and the heavens *is* coming. In the meantime, He gives people everywhere a further opportunity to repent and turn to Him. This is the reason we need to get the Word of God out. It is the only thing that can change hearts and lives.

God doesn't want anyone to come into judgment. He wants us each to pass from death to life. And you can do that—you can turn to Him and receive the wonderful salvation He has for you.

But judgment is coming ... like a thief in the night, Peter says. And with a great noise, the earth will melt. The noise Peter mentions is described as the swish of an arrow, the rush of wings, the splash of water, the hiss of a serpent.

Matter is not eternal as was once believed; you *can* get rid of matter—that is, it can be converted into energy. Peter speaks here of “the elements,” the little building blocks of the universe. This will be melted, which simply means “to untie or to unloose.” By untying the atom, science produced a little bomb that did tremendous wonders.

Because we live in a world running out of resources, today scientists are trying to release that energy. When God stocked this earth, He put plenty of oil in it and He put plenty of groceries here. But people polluted the earth and are beginning to use up what God put in the pantry and all that He put in the filling station. There is a tremendous potential of energy in the little atom, and when God destroys this earth someday, it will be a tremendous thing. God will judge in the future just as He has in the past. Then after the judgment of the earth, which Peter is describing, the new heaven and the new earth come into view.

In view of what has happened in the past and what God will do in the future, Peter asks how that should impact how we live now. Certainly, we need to live with urgency. We ought not to be standing on the sidelines, twiddling our thumbs and indulging in criticism. The question is: *What am I doing to get out the Word of God?*

A FUTURE WORLD

Finally, Peter talks about the world that *will* be (vs. 13). Even though the earth will dissolve doesn't mean God is through with the earth. As the earth was judged in the past, it will be judged in the future, but the earth will go on. We have a new heaven and a new earth to look forward to, according to God's promise. In this new creation, righteousness will dwell.

We all know that righteousness doesn't dwell on this earth today. It's not at home in this world, but it will be in the new earth and in the new heavens. God has a new model of the earth coming. What a wonderful world it will be to be characterized by all things pure and in their proper priority and place.

Given that we now know this earth has a finish line, and it will someday burn up, Peter exhorts us to remember how important a life of godliness is here and now. We are to live a holy life down here, a life separated to God. After all, what is really worthwhile in this world today? Do your goals reflect that? What is the objective of your life? Is it to live for God? If you live for God, all of these secondary issues will take care of themselves.

The Lord is patient, delaying His return in judgment so that people have the most opportunity to be saved. We reflect that patience when we make a mental adjustment to the present world situation. We shouldn't be alarmed about things running off kilter. God is in His heaven. Things are not right in the world, but He's going to make them right someday. This is the message of the New Testament.

Peter wraps up his final letter with a warning. Since you know these things, he says, be on your guard. Don't let yourself be fooled by people who distort true doctrine. Don't become lazy, not learning God's Word for yourself. It's the only way to keep steadfastness in your mind, in what you believe, and know to be true. There is no little gimmick to learn the Bible. No small program will change and revolutionize your life. Instead, be serious about studying the entire Word of God. If you have a comprehensive knowledge of Scripture and apply it to your own life, you will be a steadfast Christian.

In this letter, Peter's word has been "knowledge." The last verse of his letter sums it up well: "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

True knowledge of God is not some obscure formula, rite, or ritual. It's not some secret order or password. It is to know Jesus Christ as He is revealed to us in the Word of God. This is the secret of life and of Christian living (see John 17:3).


Notice how Peter uses the name—"our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." How precious the Lord Jesus had become to this rough, old fisherman! Peter obeyed Him as Lord, he loved Him as Savior, he adored Him as the greatest human, and he worshipped Jesus Christ as the mighty anointed Son of God.

Peter concludes his swan song with this eulogy of praise: "To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen."

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a list of booklets from the TTB.org website. The text on the screen is partially visible, showing titles like 'The Antidote to Anti-Semitism', 'Armageddon: What? Where? When?', 'Back to Bethel', and 'Balaam: A Prophet for Profit'. Each item has a 'Download' button next to it.

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