

2 Peter

1:1 Simon Peter, a bonds slave and apostle of Jesus the Messiah, to those who have received a belief that is as equally valuable as ours within the framework of the *dikaio sunay* [justification] of our God and the Savior, Jesus the Messiah.¹ **1:2** May grace and shalom be multiplied to you in the midst of a true knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.² **1:3** just as His divine power (τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) has given us all things which lead to life and proper worship of God (πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν) by means of a true knowledge of Him, who called us with reference to His own glory and excellence (ιδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ),³ **1:4** in the light of which He has given us the precious and great promises, so that you have become sharers in the divine nature (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως) through these, as you escape from the corruption in the world in the midst of its strong desire.⁴

1:5 And, indeed, regarding this same thing, while exerting all earnestness (σπουδῆν πᾶσαν), provide excellence in the midst of your belief (ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν), and in the midst of excellence, provide knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν),⁵ **1:6** and in the midst of knowledge, provide self-restraint (τὴν ἐγκράτειαν), and in the midst of self-restraint, provide perseverance (τὴν ὑπομονήν), and in the midst of perseverance, provide proper worship of God (τὴν εὐσέβειαν),⁶ **1:7** and in the midst of proper worship of God, provide brotherly love (τὴν φιλαδελφίαν), and in the midst of brotherly love, provide agape love (τὴν ἀγάπην).⁷

1:8 Now, if these things belong to you and are increasing, they cause you to be neither worthless nor unfruitful for the purpose of true knowledge (ἐπίγνωσιν) of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.⁸ **1:9** In contrast, as for the person where these things are not present, he is so near-sighted that he is blind, because he has forgotten the cleansing of his former sins.⁹ **1:10** Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm God's calling and choosing you. For if you do these things, you will never experience disaster,¹⁰ **1:11** because, in this way, the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, will be richly supplied to you.¹¹

1:12 Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you know and have become established (ἐστηριγμένους) in the truth that is present among you.¹² **1:13** I consider it right as long as I am in this tent to wake you up by way of reminder,¹³ **1:14** knowing that the removal of my tent is imminent, just as indeed our Lord Jesus the Messiah made clear to me.¹⁴ **1:15** And I will make every effort indeed, so that, after my departure, you at any time have the ability to call these things to mind.¹⁵

1:16 Besides, it was not by following ingeniously concocted myths (σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις) that we made known to you the power and grand appearance (παρουσίαν) of our Lord Jesus the Messiah, but it was because we were eyewitnesses of his grandeur.¹⁶ **1:17** For in the midst of his received honor and glory from God the Father, a voice of such a kind was produced (ἐνεχθείσης) for him by the Majestic Glory,

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased <cf. Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36>.¹⁷

1:18 And we ourselves heard this voice, which was produced (ἐνεχθείσαν) out of heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.¹⁸

1:19 Thus, we have with greater certainty the prophetic message (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον) to which you do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,¹⁹ **1:20** while knowing this first and foremost, that every prophetic comment contained in scripture (πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς) is not a matter of the person's own explanation of God.²⁰ **1:21** For no prophetic comment (προφητεία) was ever produced (ἠνέχθη) by means of the will of man, but men, being brought along (φερόμενοι) by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.²¹

2:1 Nevertheless, false prophets definitely arose in the midst of the people, just as also there will be false teachers in your midst, who will introduce destructive erroneous ideas (αίρέσεις ἀπωλείας) and will disregard the Master who bought them, while they bring imminent destruction upon themselves.²² **2:2** Indeed, many will follow their lack of moral restraint (αὐτῶν ταῖς ἀσελγείαις), and because of them, the way of truth will be treated disrespectfully (βλασφημηθήσεται).²³ **2:3** And with no respect for proper boundaries (ἐν πλεονεξία), they will sell you man-made statements. Condemnation for them is not lingering for a long time, and their destruction is not nodding off to sleep.²⁴

2:4 For if God did not refrain from dealing with *angeloi* who sinned, but instead, having cast them into Tartarus, He delivered them to chains of blackness where they are being kept for judgment,²⁵ **2:5** and if He did not refrain from dealing with the ancient world, but nevertheless preserved Noah, a proclaimer of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of those who do not properly worship God (κατακλυσμὸν κόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξιας),²⁶ **2:6** and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by turning them into ashes, having appointed them an example for those in the future who do not properly worship God (μελλόντων ἀσεβέ[σ]ιν),²⁷ **2:7** and if He rescued righteous Lot, who was being worn down by the way of life (ἀναστροφῆς) of lawless men in the midst of their lack of moral restraint (ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ),²⁸ **2:8** (for, by what he saw and what he heard, this righteous man, while dwelling among them, felt his righteous existence tormented day after day by their lawless deeds),²⁹ **2:9** then the Lord knows how to rescue those who properly worship God (εὐσεβεῖς) from temptation, and to keep for the day of judgment the unrighteous (ἀδίκους) who will be punished,³⁰ **2:10** certainly those who proceed in their lives behind the leading of the flesh in its strong desire for uncleanness and who care nothing for authority. They are reckless, self-willed people. They do not tremble when they treat disrespectfully (βλασφημοῦντες) glorious things (δόξιας),³¹ **2:11** whereas *angeloi*, even though they are greater in strength and power, do not produce (φέρουσιν) a denouncing judgment against them before the Lord.³²

2:12 But these, like irrational animals, who have been born in accordance with the natural order of things for the purpose of being captured and destroyed (φθορᾶν), because they treat disrespectfully (βλασφημοῦντες) things of which they have no good intellectual grasp, will indeed be destroyed (φθαρήσονται) in the midst of their corruption (ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ).³³ **2:13** They will justifiably receive the wage that comes from wrongdoing (ἀδικίας). They consider it a daily luxury to satisfy their pleasures. Stains and blemishes as they revel in their aesthetic deceptions while feasting together with you.³⁴ **2:14** They have eyes full of adultery and are constantly restless for sin, enticing unestablished persons (ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους), having a heart that has been trained in no respect for proper boundaries (πλεονεξίας). Children of the curse,³⁵ **2:15** abandoning the straight path, they wander about aimlessly, following the path of Balaam of Bosor, who loved the reward of wrongdoing.³⁶ **2:16** (Indeed, he received a rebuke for his own lawless act. A dumb donkey halted the insanity of the prophet when it spoke with the voice of a man.³⁷)

2:17 These are waterless springs and dark clouds in the sky, driven by a huge storm, for whom the blackness of darkness has been kept.³⁸ **2:18** Indeed, while talking about boastful things that serve no good purpose, they entice, in the midst of strong desires of the flesh, in the midst of actions that lack moral self-restraint (ἀσελγείαις), those who barely escape from them who conduct themselves in error.³⁹ **2:19** Even as they promise them freedom, they are slaves of destruction (τῆς φθορᾶς), because by that which a person is conquered (ἡττηται), to this he has been enslaved.⁴⁰

2:20 Thus, if, after having escaped from the shameful deeds of the world by means of the true knowledge (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει) of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, they have become overcome (ἡττῶνται) by them, getting entangled in these things again, then the last things have become worse for them than the first.⁴¹ **2:21** It would be better for them not to have known the way of *dikaioσunay* (δικαιοσύνης) than, having known it, to turn away from the holy instruction which had been delivered to them.⁴²

2:22 The point of the true proverb has happened to them,

A dog returns to its own vomit <Proverbs 26:11>, and

A pig, after washing herself, returns to wallowing in the mud.⁴³

3:1 I am, in fact, writing to you, brothers, this second letter in which, i.e., in both of them, I am stimulating your pure mind by way of reminder,⁴⁴ **3:2** so that you remember the words spoken previously by the prophets, who were set apart, and by the instruction of your apostles of the Lord and Savior.⁴⁵

3:3 Know this first of all, that, in the last of the days, those who dismiss the message will come in the midst of dismissiveness, while proceeding in their lives according to their own strong desires,⁴⁶ **3:4** even saying, "Where is the promise of his grand appearance? For since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of the creation."⁴⁷

3:5 For in the midst of willfully choosing this, it escapes their notice that the heavens have existed for long ago and that the earth was established out of water and through the means of water within the story of God,⁴⁸ **3:6** because of which the world at that time was destroyed when it was flooded with water.⁴⁹ **3:7** And, now, the heavens and earth have been reserved for fire with reference to the same story, as they are being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of men who do not properly worship God (τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων).⁵⁰

3:8 And let not this one thing escape your notice, beloved, that one day for the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.⁵¹ **3:9** The Lord is not hesitating in regard to His promise as some consider hesitation. Instead, He is being patient towards us. He does not desire any to be destroyed but for all to make the move to repentance.⁵² **3:10** But the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a loud, rushing noise, and the elements will be destroyed by being burned up. Indeed, the earth and the works in it will not be found.⁵³

3:11 Because all these things are set to be destroyed in this way, what kind of people is it necessary for us to be in our ways of life and actions indicative of proper worship of God that are set apart (ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις),⁵⁴ **3:12** while we wait for and hasten the grand appearance of the Day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the elements will melt by burning?⁵⁵ **3:13** Thus, according to His promise, we are waiting for a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.⁵⁶ **3:14** Therefore, beloved, while you wait for these things, make every effort to be found by Him in a state of shalom, spotless and without blemish.⁵⁷

3:15 Indeed, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom that was given to him,⁵⁸ **3:16** as that which also exists in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things. Contained in the letters are some things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unestablished (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι) distort, just as they do the rest of the writings to their own destruction.⁵⁹

3:17 You, therefore, beloved, because you know this ahead of time, be on your guard, so that you do not fall from your own establishness of commitment by being led away by the error of unprincipled men.⁶⁰ **3:18** Instead, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah. To him be the glory, both now and into the day of the age. Amen.⁶¹

¹ Συμεὼν Πέτρος δούλος καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῖς ἰσότημον ἡμῖν λαχοῦσιν πίστιν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Peter begins this letter by identifying himself as Simon Peter, using both his original Aramaic name and the one Jesus gave him in Matthew 16:18. In 1 Peter, he called himself only Peter. He also says that he is a slave of Jesus and an apostle of Jesus, who is the Messiah, the anointed, final king of Israel in the line of David. Peter serves Jesus without question and he is an authoritative spokesman for him, proclaiming his message with the same clarity, accuracy, and authority as Jesus himself. Jesus is also the Savior and champion of those who believe in him, being the means by which they obtain God’s forgiveness and blessing of the Kingdom of Israel and eternal life through his death, resurrection, ascension, return, and therefore his advocacy before the Father. Three clues that indicate that Peter is possibly writing to Jews, but he may actually be writing to the same communities of what I suggested in my notes of 1 Peter were a mixture of Gentile and Jewish Christians in what is modern northern Turkey as he mentions in 1 Peter—

1) Peter calls himself Simon Peter, using both his original Jewish name and the one which Jesus gave him in Matthew 16:18, thus making it clearer to his Jewish (?) audience who he is.

2) Peter indicates in 1:16-21 that the apostles James, John, and he were the ones who told these Christians about the NT message, thus making it probable that they are Jews who visited Jerusalem for one of the OT festivals and then returned to their foreign city. We do not have any record of James’ traveling to other locations, even though this does not mean that we can be absolutely certain that he did not. Many Christians had to leave Jerusalem as a result of the persecution that followed Stephen’s death, but Luke tells us in Acts 8:1 that the apostles stayed in the city. Plus, James, the brother of John and who was on the Mt. of Transfiguration with Peter and John, was put to death by Herod in Acts 12 just before Paul leaves on the real first missionary journey by any apostle, making it even more improbable that James traveled outside the immediate area of Jerusalem. Peter could be referring to only John and himself as the ones who proclaimed the gospel to his readers originally, but it is difficult from the book of Acts to know when the two of them would have traveled together to preach the gospel in a foreign land. On the other hand, Peter could be writing to both Jews and Gentiles (as I have suggested in my notes of 1 Peter that he does with that letter) who had visited Jerusalem during one of the prescribed OT festivals and now had returned to the area of what is modern northern Turkey.

3) Peter says in 3:15 that Paul had also written a letter to these people. This would certainly seem to point to the recipients of both this letter and Paul’s as Gentiles since Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Or it could be to a mixed Christian community of Gentiles and Jews, because Paul typically saw both a minority of Jews and a majority of Gentiles become Christians in cities through his missionary efforts. But if Paul is most likely the author of Hebrews, which is obviously written to Jewish believers who are being persecuted by Jewish non-believers, then it is possible that Peter is referring to this letter by Paul and is writing to the same Jews to whom Paul wrote his letter. I am inclined to think that this is a mixed ethnic group of Christians as I have suggested is the case with 1 Peter.

Certainly, because of Luke’s mentioning Gentile converts to Judaism as those who are in the crowd in Jerusalem who are witnessing the foreign language phenomenon of Pentecost, it is plausible that Gentiles heard the gospel of Jesus for the first time from Peter, James, and John in Jerusalem during one of the three required Jewish festivals. And, then, it is possible that Paul wrote to them (and to any Jewish believers with them) to encourage them, because of his being the apostle to the Gentiles, so that Peter has written them two letters (with this being the second – cf. 3:1), and Paul has written them one. This also means that 1 Peter is very possibly the first letter to which Peter refers.

If, therefore, Peter’s readers are Jews and Gentiles in whose community the Jewish rabbis or purported Jewish, Christian teachers, i.e., scribes and Pharisees who claim to believe in Jesus, are giving the impression that, as leaders and educated students of the OT, they are more valuable to God than Peter’s audience, then Peter is stating something quite profound about the NT message—that all Christians obtain the same gift from God, eternal mercy through the Messiah Jesus (i.e., the king and high priest of the eternal realm) and citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the belief of his readers comes with the same privilege as that of the apostles, the appropriate rabbis of God, the OT, and of the Messiah—eternal life. And all this is happening within God’s project of bringing about eternal forgiveness and mercy for human beings that includes an inward condition of being primed and ready for eternity within the present realm.

Thus, Peter can say that these Christians have *received*, not produced, their belief. It is not something that they humanly brought about in and of themselves. Instead, *God* produced it within them by changing their inwardness and causing them to believe the truth of the apostolic message.

It is also important to notice that, as in 1 Peter, this author uses much OT terminology and examples, which is exactly what he would do in the 99% Jewish, Christian community of Jerusalem as they all await God’s fulfilling both His promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, i.e.,

1) making them a great nation, and

2) granting them eternal life.

Plus, the fact that Peter identifies the belief which his audience have received as something “within the framework of the *dikaosunay*” of God and Jesus as the Messiah and king of Israel would to be emphasize that justification (obtaining a standing before God that will result in eternal forgiveness and life) and ultimately eternal life itself come through Jesus and not through the Mosaic Covenant. This is the battle that all the apostles were constantly fighting—that Jesus

and not Moses is the correct leader to follow to obtain God's blessings, even apart from Moses and his religious system (or any religious system, even a Christian one) in the ultimate sense.

² χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν – Peter's audience have heard the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah from James, John, and him and now have a true knowledge of the most important ideas that the transcendent God has desired to communicate to human beings (1:16). Therefore, Peter's desire is that God's grace, His independent and initiating kindness, along with His promise of a shalom-like existence in eternity, continue to be extended toward his readers—so that the promise comes true for these Christians (implied). Peter is saying that the key to a person's eternal destiny is the worldview to which they have committed themselves. If a person is committed to an authentic knowledge and understanding of the transcendent Creator and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, then it makes sense for an apostle like Peter to desire that God continue to extend His undeserved kindness that leads to an eternal existence of morality and wholeness to those who have come to this understanding through having had the apostolic message presented to them.

Thus, also, Jesus is this person's Lord, the one from whom he is willing to take his orders as to how he lives and directs his life—in contrast to following the unbelieving world's grasp of what is good vs. evil.

Peter in 1 Peter 1:2, here in 2 Peter 1:2 and Jude in Jude 2 are the only NT authors who use the exact form πληθυνθείη. Thus, it is very possible that this word was often combined with grace, love, shalom, and mercy (i.e., God's *hesed*) in the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem where Peter and Jude taught.

Cf. **Jude 2** May mercy [*hesed*] and shalom and love be multiplied (πληθυνθείη) to you.

³ Ὡς τὰ πάντα ἡμῖν τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν δεδωρημένης διὰ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ – Peter has just asked for God to increase His grace and the promise of shalom to these Christians, and now he likens this to what God has done for the apostles by powerfully giving them everything which they need to live life well and to take God and His truth into account by means of their coming to a different and better understanding of reality, that is, by means of the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, the similarity to which Peter is referring is the POWER which God uses to accomplish His purposes, both that of giving and teaching the apostles the gospel and giving his Christian readers grace and the promise of eternal shalom.

In this way, Peter comments on one of the most remarkable occurrences within human history—that God exercised His power to call the twelve (and eventually thirteen, with Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles) plain citizens of Israel, who, for example, were fishermen, a tax-collector, and an insurrectionist to be the Messiah's authoritative spokesmen, i.e., his apostles. These were not the leading seminary professors or biblical scholars of their day. They were common, mundane members of Israel's populace, whom Jesus taught (except for Paul) and trained to understand what it meant for him to be the Jewish Messiah.

The “all things which lead to life and respect for God” are everything which accompanies the message that these Christians heard from the apostles so that they achieved a new and remarkable understanding of Jesus the Messiah. And what would have accompanied this message? The inward work of the Holy Spirit in changing their hearts and orienting them towards God so that they became willing to make Him the most important part of their thinking about reality and how to live life and which provided them with all that they needed intellectually to obtain two things from God—“life and respect for God.”

There are three options for what Peter means by “life” (ζωή)—

- 1) eternal life
- 2) the way to live life in the present realm
- 3) both #1 and #2.

I think the immediate context points to #3, that the gospel leads Christians to live a life that is radically different from the world around them and that ultimately results in eternal life.

The meaning of εὐσέβεια (typically translated as godliness) is best described I think by a willingness to acknowledge that God is of primary importance in any conversation regarding the nature of reality, how to live, and for what reason this created reality exists, i.e., to glorify God through Jesus as the Messiah. This willingness comes about by means of His Spirit's capturing the heart of a sinner and motivating him to believe and obey the gospel.

Thus, to engage in “proper worship of God” (εὐσέβεια) is the opposite of godlessness (ασέβεια = unwillingness to take into account God when thinking of how to understand reality and to live life well (cf. Romans 1:18)). It is to make God a part of one's worldview so that it is He who is the key element of what a human being thinks about in regard to reality and life and the source of an excellent and good life. This message, then, is the wisdom to pursue a proper existence of obeying God within the present realm, because a person desires to show the utmost respect, worship, and admiration for God, His role, and His authority over reality. If God says, “Jump,” we have the right to say only, “How high,” and then obey Him as perfectly as possible even in the present realm where we remain sinners. Plus, God is the only one who truly can provide what we sinful human beings need in order to live life well—His strength, His causing us to believe, His granting us the fundamental desire to pursue biblical goodness and morality, along with the hope and guarantee of eternal life and moral perfection in the Kingdom of God.

And proper worship and obedience of God happens when people have acquired a “true knowledge” of God that comes from the writings of the prophets of the OT and Jesus' own mouth and words to the effect that he is the Messiah—as Peter will go on to indicate in 1:16-21.

God's plan was to use these apostles to identify His glory (δόξη), i.e., His greatness, and His rational and moral excellence (ἀρετή) as the one Creator God who is good, loving, gracious, and merciful. If ἀρετή refers to God's

“excellence” per se, then we can think of it as all that makes God great in His character and personhood. Thus, it includes at the very least His perfect rationality and His moral perfection that lead Him to act with sound judgment and undivided commitment to goodness as defined by His own character. God thinks excellently and He acts excellently, i.e., perfectly rationally and perfectly morally.

This also indicates that everything that God is doing with the gospel of Jesus is an expression of Himself as both glorious and excellent. By extrapolation, this story which God is telling is one of self-expression for and by God. He is revealing His goodness, His justice, His mercy, His rationality, and every other attribute of His through all that this story contains, even the great evil (and not so great evil) that people commit. They will receive either God’s mercy or His justice, depending on whether they are vessels of mercy or vessels of wrath according to Paul’s words in Romans 9.

⁴ δι’ ὧν τὰ ἴτιμα καὶ μέγιστα ἡμῖν ἐπαγγέλματα² δεδώρηται, ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθοράς³ – I think the δι’ ὧν refers to God’s glory and excellence in the previous verse. It is “in the light of” these elements of God’s own character that He has given His “precious and great promises” of the Jews’ being the most powerful nation in all history and of everyone’s acquiring eternal life through exhibiting the same kind of belief as Abraham (cf. Genesis 12:1-3) to the apostles such as Peter. This is to say that God has provided to the apostles the vital information about how He will fulfill these promises, which is through Jesus the Messiah, his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return.

Peter goes on to say that God’s purpose for conveying this message to the authoritative apostles of Jesus is “so that” (ἵνα) they could proclaim it to the Christians to whom he is sending this letter and, as a result of their believing it, they would “become sharers in the divine nature” (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως), by which I think he means participants in the way God views reality that also manifests itself in the moral way they live their lives now (as a reflection of God’s moral perfection) and the morally perfect way they will live in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Others’ translations and mine that use “nature” to translate φύσεως could easily lead to thinking that human beings will share God’s own divine substance. However, the word in other NT uses refers to the way things are, i.e., how they are put together constituting a particular order or arrangement. Thus, Peter means the planned state of things that God intends for authentic believers to experience, i.e., as moral a life as possible which someday will be a morally perfect life in the Kingdom of God that will persist into eternity. There is, then, a transition from God’s divine power/authority that worked among/in the apostles (τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ – v. 3) to God’s “nature” or divine order or arrangement of reality that will be the eternal Kingdom of God (θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως – v. 4). And this transition passes through this life as a mere stepping stone to moral perfection and immortality.

Thus, these Christians’ being willing to head towards eternal life involves their transitioning and escaping in the present realm from the destructive (things falling apart) manner in which Gentiles live according to their sinfulness as pagan idolators and from the manner in which Jews live within their humanly derived interpretation of the Mosaic Covenant, an interpretation that stems solely from their sinfulness that craves to rebel against God, which is simply the order of things or setup in this present realm, the κόσμος (ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθοράς).

In the light of God’s having inwardly changed Peter’s readers, they have transitioned to a life of properly pursuing obedience to God. Thus, Peter implies that his readers have categorically left behind their old way of life, immoral paganism and legalistic rabbinic Judaism, and have embraced a new way of life, Messianic Judaism, that is based upon God’s grace and the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who has now made his initial appearance. They have left “the corruption of the world that is in the midst of its strong desire (τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθοράς, and the word “its” is not in the text).

The phrase “in the midst of its strong desire” makes more sense to be referring to the corruption in the world and not to how the Christians except the corruption, because it is within the genitive phrase τῆς...φθοράς, “of the...corruption.” φθορά = deterioration, dissolution, falling apart, abortion, being ruined through an immoral act, total destruction. Here it refers to the moral condition of most of the world because most people are unbelievers and characterized by the “strong desire” of sin and evil within each human being, whether believers or unbelievers (as described by Paul at the end of Romans 7). But the “world” is dominated by the “strong desire” to rebel against God, regardless of the level or type of immoral choices that unbelievers make.

Galatians 6:8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (φθοράν), but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

2 Peter 2:12 But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed (φθοράν), reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction (ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ) of those creatures also be destroyed (φθαρήσονται).

2 Peter 2:19 promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption (τῆς φθοράς); for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

⁵ Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ σπουδὴν πάσαν παρεισενέγκαντες ἐπιχρηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν – These next three verses detail the natural steps that Peter lists for his readers as authentic Christians to demonstrate they have willfully and inwardly left behind “the corruption in the world by means of a strong desire.” This is why I have translated αὐτὸ τοῦτο as “regarding this same thing,” which is to say pertaining to the moral corruption that is fueled by sinful desires in those who are not changed in their inwardness and continue to be unwilling to take into account God and His moral commandments. This corruption could be in the form of pagan idolatry for Gentiles or erroneous Judaism for Jews. Thus, Peter, as he did in his first letter, is exhorting these Christians to pay attention to the way they are conducting their lives and behaving as a vital condition for obtaining the

outcome of their belief, which is eternal life.

Peter's audience has each one of them (hopefully) become authentic believers in God and Jesus the Messiah, and he exhorts them "in the midst of [their] belief" and while they are putting the greatest effort into living as God has commanded and required ("while exerting all earnestness" in their Christian behavior) to "add excellence (τὴν ἀρετήν)" to their belief. I think he means basically the same thing as the "excellence" of God he mentioned in v. 3, that is, rational and moral excellence that brings God glory (δόξη), because this is what is missing in sinners and in the world in general. They act irrationally and immorally. Thus, these Christians should work hard at behaving with rational and moral excellence in accord with God's commandments while they believe the truth of God and Jesus the Messiah.

Belief in the apostolic message is foundational to their acting and behaving in a manner that appropriately corresponds to this message. In addition, Peter expects them to be all in when it comes to what he is commanding them here. They should make every effort with an intense and committed conviction that the message that they are believing is true and that it is worth obeying for the sake of God's eternal mercy in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, their intense fervency to be authentic followers of Yahweh should include a concerted, real, human effort.

Then, in the midst of their rational and moral excellence, they should add knowledge (τὴν γνῶσιν), by which I think Peter means *more* knowledge and understanding of the biblical and apostolic message that they have heard from James, John, and him (cf. 1:18ff.), because it is only appropriate to learn as much as one can about the transcendent Creator of the reality in which they exist and about His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

2 Corinthians 9:10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower (ὁ δὲ ἐπιχορηγῶν ἱσπόρον τῷ σπείροντι) and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing (χορηγήσει καὶ πληθύνει τὸν σπόρον ὑμῶν) and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

Cf. 1 Peter 2:1-2 – **2:1** Therefore, laying aside all evil (κακίαν)—all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and speaking against others—**2:2** like newborn infants, earnestly desire the rational and truthful milk of the message, so that by it you may grow towards salvation.

⁶ ἐν δὲ τῇ γνώσει τὴν ἐγκράτειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγκρατεῖα τὴν ὑπομονήν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ὑπομονῇ τὴν εὐσέβειαν – Next, Peter exhorts his readers to provide moral self-restraint and self-control in the midst of their knowledge and understanding of God and Jesus the Messiah. Because they are still sinful, even in the midst of their being Christians and having authentic belief, they will find themselves being pulled by their desires towards disobeying God, probably on a daily and sometimes on a moment by moment basis. In fact, they will actually disobey God as sin continues to operate within them, because they do not become morally perfect until they reach the eternal Kingdom of God (cf. Romans 7 & 8). Nevertheless, they have embraced the message of Jesus as the Messiah that promises them mercy and perfect moral goodness in eternity. Therefore, Peter is encouraging them to use as much self-control and restraint as they can personally muster by the grace of God to choose not to follow their strong desires to disobey God.

Next, in the midst of their moral restraint and self-control, they should provide perseverance and endurance (τὴν ὑπομονήν) of their belief and obedience. This would be also in the midst of all the pressures to abandon belief in God and follow either the lies of pagan idolatry or the erroneous Jewish system of religion that is based upon an improper view of the Mosaic Covenant and that was current in their day (and in ours, too).

Then, in the midst of their persevering belief and obedience, Peter exhorts them to provide godliness (τὴν εὐσέβειαν), by which I think he means proper worship of God as I translated this word also in v. 3. This is a willingness to include God in a person's thinking about reality and how to live life, a respect which God obviously deserves because He is the very author of reality. He is our ultimate authority, and, therefore, He should be obeyed above every other authority. Thus, these Christians' behavior should reflect God's moral commandments and should reveal that they are radically different from their fellow Gentiles or Jews who are either worshipping false gods whose cults celebrate the satisfying of all immoral and insatiable desires or who are attempting to obey God's moral commandments in the Mosaic Covenant, but with the wrong perspective because of their fundamental unbelief in and disregard for Jesus as the Messiah.

⁷ ἐν δὲ τῇ εὐσεβείᾳ τὴν φιλαδελφίαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ τὴν ἀγάπην – __Second from the end of Peter's list of what should follow from having become an authentic believer is, he says that, in the midst of respect for God, his audience should add brotherly love (τὴν φιλαδελφίαν), from which we get the word Philadelphia and by which I think he means the care and concern for each other within the community of Christians. This is something he emphasizes in 1 Peter.

Then, finally, in the midst of their brotherly love, they should add the very simple love (τὴν ἀγάπην), by which I think he means love for God. Therefore, Peter ends with the most important item in line with the first of the two great commandments in the Torah, to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. It's plausible that Peter means a general love for other human beings by τὴν ἀγάπην and which should be a part of their continuing to carry out the apostles' responsibility of sharing the message of Jesus as the Messiah with the world, but I think that love for God is correct—that Peter starts with belief in God and ends with love for God, with the other characteristics in the middle.

Galatians 5:13 Brothers, you were called on the basis of freedom. Only do not use your freedom for an occasion of the flesh, but serve one another with love. **5:14** For the whole Torah has been summed up in one statement, You shall love your neighbor as yourself <Leviticus 19:18>.

Galatians 6:10 Therefore, while we have the opportunity, let us do good towards all men, and especially towards the

members of the household of the faith.

But these do not point conclusively to interpreting τὴν ἀγάπην as love for unbelievers.

⁸ ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῖν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλεονάζοντα οὐκ ἀργούς οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους καθίστησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν – Just how important are the qualities that Peter mentioned in vs. 5-7 that Christians should add them to their belief and earnestness? Peter says that they are vital in order to enter the Kingdom of God. He indicates that the presence and even increase of these qualities (even if what he means by “increasing” is a firmer single-minded commitment to them) means that they are technically living worthwhile and fruitful lives that has all to do with their grasping and embracing a proper understanding of Jesus as the Messiah, their “true knowledge of our Lord Jesus the Messiah.” They are exhibiting the fruit of knowing God and Jesus accurately, embracing Him and Jesus with genuine belief, and living in a properly obedient manner as a Christian before his God.

This is to say that they are matching their lives with their correct, intellectual understanding and persevering in their understanding. In the light of the next verses that speak of someone’s abandoning his belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the increase of these qualities that Peter is talking about refers to a Christian’s becoming more firmly committed inwardly to the truth of the NT message in the midst of demonstrating these qualities as much as possible.

Thus, the fruit is both belief in Jesus and the pursuit of moral excellence, etc. with earnestness. This is the result of believing the “true knowledge” of God and Jesus as Lord and Messiah. This is to say that the “purpose of true knowledge (ἐπίγνωσιν) of our Lord Jesus the Messiah” is to bear the fruit of an existential Christian life as Peter describes in vs. 5-7.

Matthew 7:15 Watch out for false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are thieving wolves. **7:16** You will know them by their fruit. They neither gather grapes from thorns nor figs from thistles. **7:17** Likewise, every good tree produces good fruit, and the bad tree produces bad fruit. **7:18** It is impossible for a good tree to produce bad fruit, and for a bad tree to produce good fruit. **7:19** Every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. **7:20** Therefore, you will know them by their fruit.

⁹ ᾧ γὰρ μὴ πάρεστιν ταῦτα, τυφλός ἐστιν μωπάζων, λήθην λαβὼν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν – Here Peter contrasts the authentic believer with the person who has encountered the gospel, has made an appearance of becoming a Christian, but is not interested in taking on all that is involved with remaining a Christian. It is as though he has become blind to the real issues of how to live the Christian life, which includes seeking to do what is good and right in line with God’s commandments, on the basis of Jesus’ death which results in the forgiveness of sins for the believing sinner. He has forgotten what Jesus’ death ultimately means. It means Life (and a pursuit of biblical morality), not death (and license to do what is immoral) from God.

Peter uses the OT word “cleansing” (καθαρισμός). Rather than address the issue of the “world” that is made up of people who in general are unwilling to submit to God *in the midst of their ignorance of the biblical message*, Peter goes on to talk about unbelievers *who have heard this message and yet have demonstrated some initial level of attraction to it*. In the light of the possibility that Peter’s readers are both Gentiles and Jews, Peter is speaking about different ethnic believers in that community who could not sustain their faith in the midst of the various pressures coming from either inside (cf. chapter 2) or outside their group, whether the pressure to abandon their faith is the result of intense persecution or the need to satisfy their insatiable, immoral desires.

Thus, Peter says that the person who does not demonstrate the kind of qualities that he listed in the previous verses, even if this person had apparently embraced the message of Jesus as the Messiah and claimed to understand it, is in fact an unbeliever. In other words, these qualities are truly a necessary requirement for obtaining God’s mercy, just as is a fundamental belief in Jesus as the Messiah after hearing about him. If belief is not accompanied by a foundational desire to continue to believe and grow in one’s understanding of God, along with a diligent pursuit of basic, biblical morality, then the belief is not genuine and, therefore, will not last.

Peter will go on in chapter 2 to discuss false teachers who have heard and supposedly believed the apostolic message. However, they have given up their belief and gone back to the erroneous ideas that they held prior to being exposed to the gospel. Indeed, this very human condition of believing truth and subsequently going back to lies is a major theme of this letter. Next, Peter will encourage his readers to make sure they do not do this.

¹⁰ διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε τ [δια τῶν καλῶν ἐργῶν] βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιείσθαι ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ὅποτε – Peter is saying that once a person comes to a correct knowledge of Jesus as the Messiah through whom he obtains God’s mercy at the judgment, he should always make every effort and be diligent (σπουδάσατε) to pursue confirming that he is a genuine believer and has been chosen and selected by God for eternal salvation. How does he do this? By “doing these things” (ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες). And what are “these things”? The qualities which he listed in the previous verses. This is why the variant δια τῶν καλῶν ἐργῶν probably makes sense as having been original. It is the through the good works of moral excellence, knowledge, restraint, perseverance, respect for God, brotherly love, and love for God that a person “confirms God’s calling and choosing” him (βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιείσθαι).

God’s “calling” (κλήσιν) here is not just His making an appeal through a human speaker for him to believe the gospel. It is much more this. It is God’s both appealing to him to believe and causing him to believe through the inward work of His Spirit.

And this kind of “calling” takes place because of God’s having “chosen” (ἐκλογὴν) him from before the beginning of the creation as He composed the entire story of human history in His mind.

Obviously, this is the most valuable self-knowledge that a human being can possess, because if a person confirms his

active calling and choice by God through pursuing growth in the qualities that Peter has listed and achieves this growth, then he “will never experience disaster” (οὐ μὴ παύσῃτε). He will never literally “fall” into the catastrophe of eternal destruction, which is the awful consequence of God’s wrath and eternal condemnation that occurs for those who abandon their supposed belief in Jesus.

Consequently, there is great value in accurate knowledge of God and self-knowledge in regard to one’s biblical belief and that comes through making every effort live a life in accordance with God’s biblical, moral commandments, while also still being a sinner.

¹¹ οὕτως γὰρ πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἴσοδος ἑῶς εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Peter is saying that the above is how a person survives God’s judgment and is given a clear and completely unobstructed “path” that he “walks” from the judgment into the eternal Kingdom of God (ἡ εἴσοδος ἑῶς εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτήρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In this “way,” the entrance in God’s eternal kingdom is richly supplied (πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται) to all authentic believers.

This is also the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah, because as the icon of God it is he who rules over the kingdom from within the creation.

The upshot of what Peter has been expressing in these first three paragraphs of his letter (vs. 1-11) is very much salvation by works, which is to say, by both belief in accurate knowledge and works of biblical morality. We sinners will not enter into the eternal Kingdom of God without diligently choosing to make our whole human existences different from the people of the world who are committed to rebelling against God and, instead, like Jesus’ existence, the apostles’ existences, and those of the Old Testament believers such as Abraham. Therefore, if Peter’s audience “provide” a whole existence of authentic believers, then God will “provide” the eternal Kingdom of God to them. A quid pro quo by means of God’s grace and where there is no earning by sinful human beings that is going on.

If Peter is writing to only Jews, then it certainly makes sense that the aionic kingdom (τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν) begins with the Millennial Kingdom of Israel’s greatness as God promised in Genesis 12 and then continues with the new earth (cf. Revelation 20,21). Nevertheless, if he is writing to both Jews and Gentiles, then it still makes sense that he means both the first stage and the second stage of this kingdom.

Isaiah 26:19, “Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits (רוּחַיִם מֵתִים יִצְמְחוּ) (ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται).” However, compare the Septuagint translation of Isaiah 26:14 & 19 with respect to רוּחַיִם (= spirits of the dead, shades) — ἰατροὶ=healers, doctors in v. 14 and τῶν ἀσεβῶν=ungodly in v. 19. Nevertheless, it makes more sense in the context of Isaiah that certainly the first use in v. 14 be translated ἀσεβεῖς, so that it refers to ungodly people who are unwilling to acknowledge God and who have oppressed the Jews, the people of God. Then, in v. 19, consistent with the other lines in the verse, רוּחַיִם refers merely to Israelites who have died but were people of authentic belief, so that, now, they will realize eternal life.

¹² Διὸ μελλήσω ἄει ὑμᾶς ὑπομνήσκω ἐπεὶ τούτων καίπερ εἰδότας καὶ ἐστηρικμένους ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείᾳ – Peter has just described the kind of life which is a necessary condition in order to gain eternal life from God. And this kind of life is obviously so important as a necessary condition that he considers it an obligation of his to remind his readers of it for the sake of their eternal destiny. And this is in spite of the fact that they already know this information, because it is implied that they have learned it from the apostles at a prior time and thus have become “established” (ἐστηρικμένους) in the truth of the gospel. They are entrenched and ensconced in truth like pillars in rock, thereby making them authentic believers and obedient to God. Plus, by becoming established in it, they have it readily available to them at any moment to recall it and use it for instructing them in how to live their lives in a proper manner before God so that they do obtain eternal mercy and life from Him.

To be “established” (ἐστηρικμένους) in the truth will also qualify these Christians for eternal life, because Peter will say in 3:15-16 that the “unestablished” (ἀστήρικτοι) distort the “hard to understand” things in Paul’s letter and the “rest of” the Bible, thus disqualifying themselves from “salvation” and eternal life, because they are false teachers (as in chapter 2), who will incur “destruction” instead.

Thus, Peter is implying, as Jude does in v. 5 of his letter, that the Christians to whom he is writing have already both learned and embraced the entirety of the Bible message that includes the stories of sinful human beings’ disobedience, God’s justice, and their destruction by Him to which he will refer in chapter 2. He is also implying that continuing to embrace the entirety of the information about God’s justice, judgment, and destroying unbelieving sinners necessary in order to obtain eternal salvation and life. Peter also means that the false teachers of chapter 2 may teach important portions of the Bible, e.g., regarding God’s and Jesus’ love for sinners, but that they are leaving out certain parts about God’s justice and particular sins that He rejects and will judge so as to destroy those who persist in them. In other words, these false teachers may seem to be all about God’s and Jesus’ love for human beings, but they are ignoring His justice (that means they are ignoring the sins that result in God’s justice) and the coming judgment and destruction of created beings, *angeli* and human beings, who remain committed to disobeying God.

2 Peter 3:15 Indeed, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom that was given to him, **3:16** as that which also exists in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things. Contained in the letters are some things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unestablished (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι) distort, just as they do the rest of the writings to their own destruction. Exactly what the future tense μελλήσω means here is not clear, but “I will be ready” is probably correct. Thus, Peter

expects and hopes that there will be additional opportunities besides this letter to remind his audience of the concepts which he is presenting to them—through even another letter, I assume, or in person, depending on whether or not they visit Jerusalem again or if he gets the chance to come to them where they live.

Peter calls the apostolic message the truth (*ἀληθεία*), which is to say it comprises the true ideas that Peter and others have presented to them and circulates among them as authentic believers. This is in contrast to the false ideas that also circulate among them from the false teachers and against which Peter is writing.

Peter will comment in vs. 16ff. on the fact that it was he and the other apostles who first presented the gospel to this audience.

¹³ δίκαιον δὲ ἠγοῦμαι, ἐφ' ὅσον εἰμι ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκηνώματι, διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ἴψομνήσει – Peter refers to a common syndrome among human beings, even after they become inwardly changed by God and authentic believers in the truth. They can easily become dull in the understanding of the truth, as if they have gone to sleep and are no longer able to think about God, the Christian life, and reality in a proper way. As a result, Peter feels a moral obligation to wake his readers up (*διεγείρειν*) and to repeat/remind (*ἐν ἴψομνήσει*) what they already know over and over as part of what they need to persevere in their belief to the end of their lives.

And Peter considers this moral obligation of reminding to be something that he must do as long as he is present in the world, which is to say as long as he is “in this tent” (*ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκηνώματι*), in his temporary human body before he dies and eventually obtains his permanent, immortal, and morally perfect body when Jesus returns.

¹⁴ εἰδὼς ὅτι ταχινή ἐστιν ἡ ἀπόθεσις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου ἡκαθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐδήλωσέν μοι – Peter’s sense of the rightness of his repeating his exhortations to his readers is enhanced by the fact that “the removal of his tent” (*ἡ ἀπόθεσις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου [αὐτοῦ]*), i.e., that he believes that he does not have long to live, with the idea, obviously, that his death will end any opportunity to speak to them again with a personal letter or in person. Or, perhaps, he is thinking that this letter will outlast him and, therefore, be the way that he can repeat these things after he no longer can personally. Or he has in mind both his imminent departure from this world and the longer lasting letter which he is writing to them now, the latter which on which he comments in the next verse.

Peter also indicates that Jesus had somehow informed Peter that his life would not be a long one or would end violently like his own and so to be ready for such a situation.

Cf. John 21:17-19, which is probably not exactly that to which Peter is referring, but it does seem to say that his death will not be something which he would readily embrace – **21:17** He said to him a third time, “Simon of John, do you love (*φιλεῖς*) me?” Peter was grieved that he said to him a third time, “Do you love (*φιλεῖς*) me?” So he said to him, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love (*φιλω*) you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep. **21:18** Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger, you would dress yourself and go where you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, someone else will dress you and will bring you where you do not wish.” **21:19** He said this to signify by what kind of death he would glorify God. After saying this, he said to him, “Follow me.”

¹⁵ σπουδάσω δὲ ἡκαθὼς ἐκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον τὴν τούτων ἡμνήμην ποιῆσθαι – Here Peter is definitely thinking of the mere effort of writing this letter and its existence as the means for his audience to be able to recall these ideas after his death.

Therefore, his putting the kind of effort into this letter that makes these ideas as clear and understandable as possible to his readers so that they can recall them later is a good thing.

¹⁶ Οὐ γὰρ σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις ἐξακολουθήσαντες ἐγνωρίσαμεν ὑμῖν τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν ἀλλ' ἐπόπται γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος – The Ancient Near East was filled with tall tales (*μῦθοι*) of a multitude of gods, the mythologies of the Akkadians, Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Hittites, Canaanites, Greeks, Romans, and many other peoples. I think that Peter is here calling these mythologies “cleverly devised/concocted/invented myths” (*σεσοφισμένοις μύθοις*) that people follow (*ἐξακολουθήσαντες*) and that involve the death and resurrection of some of the gods of the other ancient peoples’ pantheons.

It might seem to some people when they first heard the gospel of Jesus as the Messiah that someone had concocted this tale in the same way that others had made up the stories of Zeus, Baal, Ishtar, Molech, and other false gods, so that Jesus was just another god out there whom some believed had visited the earth. But Peter begs to differ. In contrast to these invented myths (*μῦθοι*), the apostles “were eyewitnesses of his grandeur” (*ἐπόπται γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος*). No invention here. Instead, pure fact and truth about this man.

As a result of their eyewitness experiences, the apostles were able to make known to these Christians the “power and grand appearance” (*δύναμιν καὶ παρουσίαν*) of Jesus, by which I think Peter means all that Jesus said, did, and experienced as the designated Messiah, i.e., his teaching that was “as one who spoke with authority,” to quote people mentioned in the gospels, as well as the miracles that God performed through him, and the event of the Mt. of Transfiguration, which Peter will go on to mention here. In other words, in this verse, Peter is claiming to have been an eyewitness of Jesus’ life as the Messiah, i.e., his “power and grand appearance” (which was his first appearance) whereby he performed miracles as brought about by God and claimed to be the long-expected King and Priest of the Jews. And his life included the incident on the mountain when Moses and Elijah appeared to a transformed Jesus with gleaming white clothes (his “grandeur” (*μεγαλειότης*)) along with the voice out of heaven from the transcendent Father that stated clearly Jesus’ identity and role as the Son of God (cf. Matthew 17:1-13). Only James and John were with Jesus and Peter at this time.

Here, the “we” must refer to the Peter, James, and John as members of the original apostles and not to, for example,

Paul or even any of the other apostles. Therefore, these are Christians to whom Paul has written (2 Peter 3:15) but who did not hear the message of Jesus the Messiah originally from him. They heard it from Peter and/or James and/or John and, most likely, therefore, in Jerusalem, because of the strong possibility that these men never left Jerusalem on the basis of no mention in Acts or other NT documents of their having done so. In addition, Peter's readers must be from a city outside of Jerusalem and relatively far away, because he is writing them a letter. Therefore, they must have visited Jerusalem, probably during one of the three OT festivals, and maybe even asked to see the head apostles because they had heard about and become intrigued with the news of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Then, they had become believers, returned to their Jewish community in some other city, perhaps even outside of Israel proper, and now were being encouraged by Peter in their faith through this letter. Consequently, could this group be the Jewish Christian community to whom Paul wrote Hebrews? If so, then Peter has written to them before, too, and probably (?) with 1 Peter (cf. 2 Peter 3:1 and my notes on 1 Peter). While these Christians to whom Peter has written may be members of communities of believers which include Gentiles, nevertheless, he perhaps has in mind mostly his Jewish brothers in the Lord to whom he presented the gospel when they visited Jerusalem for one of the OT feasts.

Two broad possibilities –

- 1) Someone is accusing the apostles of making up the story and message of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, e.g., the leaders of current rabbinic Judaism who may be claiming that the apostles have embellished the stories of Jesus to make him out to be the God-ordained and resurrected Messiah (whereas, in stark contrast to this, Peter, James, and John experienced firsthand God's miraculous actions toward Jesus to verify his Messiahship) or leaders of the pagan religions that existed in the 1st century Roman Empire, especially in the area of Asia (modern Turkey), or
- 2) Peter is accusing all those who present explanations of reality that do not include Jesus as the Messiah of concocting myths (=explanations of reality that are not based upon an accurate understanding of the OT and reality). Narrowing this last possibility, Peter is talking about either
 - a) Gentile pagans who have made up all the myths of their polytheism that explain their gods, or
 - b) Jewish rabbis who have made up the Oral Law that they teach within Judaism, or
 - c) both a) and b).

If Peter is writing to only Jewish Christians, then either 1) or 2b). If 1), then it is the case that the false teachers, like the Jews against whom Paul writes Hebrews, are denying that Jesus is the Messiah while continuing to worship with the Jewish believers, because this is what they all have always done in the Jewish community in which they live. However, in this case, the false teachers are encouraging the Jewish believers to abandon their belief in Jesus as the Messiah and return to be simply Mosaic Covenant following Jews.

If 2), then both pagan religious leaders and Jewish religious leaders are denying that Jesus is the Messiah while continuing in their respective religions. My guess is more 2) than 1) if Peter's audience is a collection of Jews and Gentiles, as they should be in any city or village outside the land of Israel. But it is hard to pin down exactly.

¹⁷ λαβὼν γὰρ παρὰ τῆς θεοῦ πατρὸς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν φωνῆς ἐνεχθείσης αὐτῷ τοιάσδε ὑπὸ τῆς μεγαλοπρεποῦς δόξης· ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός μου οὗτός ἐστιν· εἰς ὃν ἐγὼ εὐδόκησα – cf. [Matthew 17:2](#) And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light...[17:5](#) While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, "a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to him!"

I suppose that Peter could have mentioned either Jesus' baptism or the event in John 12 when God spoke from heaven and identified Jesus as His Son and the Messiah. But it makes sense too that he focuses on the time when Jesus also changed as additional evidence that he was a special person. "His face shone like the sun, and his garments became as white as light."

Thus, Peter's "proof" of the veracity of his information about Jesus, that it is not a "cleverly concocted myth," is

- 1) the miraculous transformation of Jesus into a visible state of glory while talking to Moses and Elijah and then
- 2) God's voice from His transcendent position of Jesus' identity and role. When he was "transfigured" right before their eyes, this was the first step in his receiving "honor and glory from God the Father" (παρὰ τῆς θεοῦ πατρὸς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν). Then the voice out of heaven identifying Jesus as God's Son was the second step in this process.

These two sequential acts of God of an unusual and glorious nature of which Peter was an eyewitness with James and John allows him to comment in the following verses on the role of a prophet of God. It must involve God's communicating to the prophet exactly what He wants him to say on His behalf. Therefore, Peter, James, and John had not only Jesus' instructing them as the Messiah, but also the transcendent God's instructing them through Jesus' transfiguration and His own audible voice within the creation. God literally said, "This is My Son," i.e., the final Davidic king who will restore the Kingdom of Israel and rule over the eternal Kingdom of God. By virtue of the two manners in which these three men had received truth from God, i.e., through His Messiah and through His miraculous change of Jesus accompanied by His own voice, they took on the role of true prophets to the people.

It would have been interesting to see what the reaction would have been if Jesus' transfiguration and God's voice had taken place in the sight of a large Jewish crowd that included the Pharisees and Sadducees. We do have a record of God's voice being heard when Jesus was baptized and when he entered Jerusalem (cf. Mark 1:11 and John 12:28). But the theological fact is that without God's changing any of their hearts, the people still rejected Jesus and executed him as a charlatan, because certainly his hundreds (thousands?) of miracles displayed a similar glory which they should have recognized as God's credentialing him as the Messiah and some of the people heard these heavenly voices and could report about them as truly having heard them.

It is also interesting that Peter cites this event instead of Jesus' resurrection and appearance to his disciples. I wonder if it has something to do with the Jews' expectations of the visible glory of the Messiah who restores the Davidic Kingdom and destroys their enemies.

Zechariah 14:1 Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. **2** For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. **3** Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. **4** In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. **5** You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!

¹⁸ καὶ ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν ἔξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθεῖσαν σὺν αὐτῷ ὄντες ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει – Here Peter ends the story he has briefly told with the important detail that James, John, and he definitely “heard this voice” (ταύτην τὴν φωνὴν ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν) on the mountain, which was a voice “produced out of heaven” (ἔξ οὐρανοῦ ἐνεχθεῖσαν), meaning that it came from a source other than one on the earth, i.e., it came from the transcendent Creator Himself. And this happened while they were with Jesus on the mountain (σὺν αὐτῷ ὄντες ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ ὄρει). He was there. They were there. And the voice of God was there, all making for their ability to tell exactly what happened so that their information about Jesus is in no way an “ingeniously concocted myth” (cf. v. 16). They were “eyewitnesses of his grandeur” (ἐπόπται γεννηθέντες τῆς ἐκείνου μεγαλειότητος).

Even though the gospel accounts indicate that there were several occasions when God spoke like this into the created reality about Jesus, Peter refers to just one time specifically, the event on the so-called Mt. of Transfiguration (cf. Matthew 17:1-13). Could he be referring to this particular time because of its similarity to Moses who heard the voice of God on Mt. Sinai, from which the rabbinic leaders are claiming that they are deriving their authoritative understanding of God and reality? Thus, Peter would be saying to them that James, John, and he had their own Moses-like experience with the transcendent Creator that went on to include their being taught the biblical message by the Messiah himself. In any event, the “we” refers to just the three apostles who were there—Peter, James and John, the latter two being brothers.

The point that Peter is making that, in spite of what the false teachers are saying, he has divine proof that Jesus is the Messiah because of the evidence which James, John, and he personally experienced, which means that his readers have a divine and moral obligation to listen to and believe what he has to say about Jesus. If they ignore Peter's message, then they will be guilty of ignoring God—not a good thing eternally speaking. Cf. v. 19.

¹⁹ καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, ᾧ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες ὡς λύχνῳ φαίνοντι ἐν ἀσχηρῷ τόπῳ, ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα διαυγάσῃ καὶ ἠφωσφόρος ἀνατείλῃ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν – Now Peter draws an important conclusion from showing that he (along with James and John) was an eyewitness to the events that affirmed Jesus as the Messiah (in contrast to anyone claiming they were an eyewitness to anything that happened to Zeus, Baal, Astarte, and other false gods).

Two options for “prophetic message” (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον) –

- 1) the OT information provided by prophets during that time, or
- 2) the gospel as provided by Jesus through his words and actions and God through his occasional words and activity through Jesus when, for example, he “performed” miracles.

I think that #2 makes the most sense here, that Peter is claiming divine and prophetic status for the gospel which makes him with James and John “prophets of God,” i.e., spokesmen for God with His authority, clarity, and accuracy.

Thus, on the basis of his eyewitness experience with both Jesus as the Son of God and the transcendent Creator as the one who spoke out of the sky, Peter declares that James, John, and he have just that much more or greater certainty (ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον) of the truth of what they proclaim, which he calls the “prophetic message” (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον), i.e., the information about Jesus as the Messiah that originally came from the transcendent Creator and was transmitted by not only Jesus' own words, but also the events of his life, which included the Father's speaking into the created reality without appearing in it as an *angelos* of Yahweh like the burning bush of Exodus 3.

As a result, Peter and the other apostles learned of the Messiah through this “prophetic message” so to speak that was the life and words of the Messiah himself. In addition, Peter, James, and John became even more confident in the veracity of this message and its messianic ideas when, on the Mt. of Transfiguration, they saw Jesus change into a brightly shining icon of God and they heard Yahweh explicitly declare in their human language from His transcendent position that Jesus is the Davidic king. We also know from the gospel accounts that this statement by God occurred on two other occasions (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; 12:6; Luke 3:22; 20:13. Also cf. John 12:28).

Plus, because of the eternal impact of this message, Peter says that his readers should give great enduring attention to it (καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες) throughout the rest of their lives, implying that doing so will result in a great benefit for them. The presence of this information is like a lamp that shines in the moral and spiritual darkness that exists on earth apart from it (ὡς λύχνῳ φαίνοντι ἐν ἀσχηρῷ τόπῳ), just as Paul says in Ephesians 5:16, “The days are evil” (cf. John 1:5 – Indeed, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not win out over it).

Thus, if someone wants to live life well and not “stumble” over unseen rocks of error, he should embrace the “light” of the message of Jesus as the Messiah. The result will be that the “day will dawn and the morning star will rise in a

person's heart" (ἕως οὗ τῆς ἡμέρας διαυγάσει καὶ φωσφόρος ἀνατείλει ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν), meaning that the person will experience the transition from the present dark realm of sinfulness through the final judgment to the bright morning light of the eternal Kingdom of God where Jesus will reign as king.

There are other passages that use the phrase "morning star," such as Revelation 2:28, where Jesus says that he will give "the morning star" (τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν) to the person who endures in his belief. Then, in Revelation 22:16, Jesus calls himself "the bright morning star" (ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός). There is also Isaiah 14:12, where the evil king of Babylon is called "the star of the morning, son of the dawn" (כְּכֹכֵב־בֹּרֵךְ לְבָרִיךְ) (ὁ ἑωσφόρος ὁ πρωὶ ἀνατέλλων).

Consequently, this label was an idiomatic expression in the agricultural societies of the ANE that referred to the optimistic hope that people could have when nighttime ended and morning dawned that they were alive and well for surviving another day whereby they could do the work that was necessary in order to provide food, shelter, clothing, and protection from their enemies for themselves. Even the king of Babylon had referred to himself this way as the supposedly wise and powerful ruler of his people, thus elevating himself above Yahweh in his own mind and in the mind of the subjects of his empire. In a similar vein, Peter calls eternal life the "morning star" for his readers, because it will be when they transition from this dark and immoral realm into it that they will experience the same kind of optimistic hope and enjoyment that the ANE people experienced when every day dawned a new day. However, the believers' optimism and joy will obviously be so much greater than that of anyone who is looking at only what the new day in the present realm can bring.

²⁰ τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται –

Two options for what Peter is saying –

- 1) Peter affirms that a proper explanation of the OT prophets' message cannot come merely from whatever human beings might want to imagine that it is, or
- 2) Peter affirms that a proper explanation of God by the OT prophets did not ultimately come from them, but from God, so that in the same way, a proper explanation of Jesus as the Messiah does not ultimately come from James, John, and him, but from God.

I think that #2 makes more sense in that Peter is making a case for the truth of his message in contrast to the "ingeniously concocted myths" of pagan religions (or even erroneous Judaism?). Therefore, προφητεία means prophetic message in the same way that τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον does in the previous verse. However, here Paul is referring to any prophetic message found in "scripture," i.e., in the OT, while in the previous verse he was referring to the gospel.

In the case of James, John, and him, Peter is following up on what he said in vs. 16 & 17 to the effect that it was God who "told" him (and James and John) that Jesus is the Messiah through Jesus' life and words, including the experience that they had on the Mount of Transfiguration when God explicitly spoke from His transcendent position into the story of the created reality. Therefore, as I said, option #2 above makes more sense, so that Peter is also saying that the false teachers' authority to speak on behalf of God is nothing in comparison to James', John's, and his. The false teachers have not heard from God. James, John, and Peter have. By this they are "certain" that what they say about Jesus is true. Can the false teachers cite a similar experience with God? Obviously not.

Similarly, should people just start talking about God as though they know what they are talking about, as though God has given them the "prophetic message" so to speak, even if they have "studied" the Bible and been "trained" by supposedly reputable instructors, e.g., seminary professors, or, perhaps, are members of this esteemed class of Christians, i.e., seminary professors and ordained pastors? No. All they can do is point to the apostles and other biblical authors while getting out of the way of other individuals' doing their own work. Modern pastors should be discussion leaders mainly and not dogmatic teachers.

²¹ οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἠνέχθη τῆς προφητείας ποτέ, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι – Peter is stating categorically and unambiguously that the explanations of God in the OT are not from the imaginations of man but from the mouth of God through the work of God within the creation, i.e., through His Holy Spirit—transmitted by the Spirit to the prophets who transmitted it by the Spirit to their audiences, who were mainly the Jews. Thus, their explanations of God were true. In the same way, Peter is claiming divinely given apostolic authority and accuracy for James, John, and himself as those who, initially by mouth and now in letter, have presented and continue to present the "prophetic message" of the NT ideas of Jesus as the Messiah to these readers. Just as the OT prophets' ideas about Yahweh were true through the work of the Holy Spirit, Peter's ideas about Jesus as the Messiah are true through the same Spirit.

Just as "no prophetic comment was ever produced (ἠνέχθη – aorist indicative passive 3ms of φέρω) by the will of man," so also men who make prophetic comments are never "brought along" (φερόμενοι – present participle middle/passive 1cp of φέρω) except "by the Holy Spirit" in order to "speak from God."

Jeremiah 14:14 Then Yahweh said to me, "The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds."

Jeremiah 23:21,22 – I did not send the prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they spoke. But if they had stood in My council, then they would have made My people hear My words, and they would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their actions.

²² Ἐγένοντο δὲ καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐν τῷ λαῷ, ὡς καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν ἔσονται ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι, οἵτινες παρεισάξουσιν αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας καὶ τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι. ἐπάγοντες ἑαυτοῖς ταχὴν ἀπώλειαν –

Having used in the previous verses the example of prophets as spokesmen of God in the OT and likened the authority with which they spoke to that of the apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus, Peter now refers to the fact that there were false prophets who claimed to be spokesmen for God among the Israelites in the OT, but who disseminated lies instead (Ἐγένοντο δὲ καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐν τῷ λαῷ). While it should be obvious that a person cannot speak on behalf of God without God's making it clear that He is granting this responsibility and privilege to him, certain people in OT times arrogantly tried to pawn themselves off as authoritative, divine spokesmen when they had no business doing so.

For example, Jeremiah 23:16, “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility. They speak a vision of their own imagination (חֲזוֹן יְהוָה) (ὄρασιν ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτῶν), not from the mouth of Yahweh (פִּי יְהוָה) (οὐκ ἀπὸ στόματος κυρίου).” Key words here are “a vision of their own imagination, not from the mouth of Yahweh.” This is what sinful human beings are so good at doing, is making things up in their heads that have no actual relation to reality and to what God is saying except to describe something that is simply not true or moral. These are the “ingeniously concocted myths” of the ANE to which Peter referred in 1:16 and things such as atheistic Darwinian evolution and the false ideas of even “reputable” Bible teachers in our own time.

Peter is also probably referring to the same dynamic as Paul when he said to the elders of Ephesus, Acts 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”

Consider also Gal. 2:4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

Also 2 Corinthians 11:12 But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

Like the hyper-imaginative false prophets of the OT, so-called Christians in Peter's day and in the midst of his audience will claim that they can teach the biblical message, but their ideas are as false and deceitful as those of the false prophets of OT Israel.

These “false teachers” (ψευδοδιδάσκαλοι) will lure people away from God as they abandon the apostolic message for something which they have made up in their minds. Peter will go on to explain that the thrust of their message will appeal to people's insatiable, human desires, but also will lead them away from keeping these desires in check and satisfying them in a biblical and moral way. They will condone immoral desires and lifestyles while claiming to promote God's and Jesus' love, i.e., love for even those who rebel against God while the false teachers insist that they are not rebelling against God.

Peter also says that these false teachers “will introduce destructive erroneous ideas” (παρεισάξουσιν αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας) in the community of believers. The word for “introduce” is literally “lead into beside.” Many English translations add the word “secretly” or the phrase “under false pretenses.” This negative idea may be there in what Peter means, that it is under the false pretense that they are bona fide teachers of the Bible and of the gospel that these teachers speak to the Christians. But the word/phrase is not actually there. The word “introduce” seems to be able to have either a positive or a negative connotation, and certainly Peter uses it with a negative connotation. These teachers should not be teaching, but they are. Plus, Peter calls their false ideas “destructive erroneous ideas” (αἰρέσεις ἀπωλείας). We get our word *heresies* from the Greek word which I have translated here “erroneous ideas,” where the verb means simply to choose. The ideas the false teachers have “chosen” are ones which are instead of the truth. Therefore, the word αἰρέσεις (*haireseis* = sect, group, the ideas of a group) has a negative connotation here in 2 Peter. These are man-made chosen ideas which are leading people away from biblical, moral obedience of God and will result in eternal death and destruction, not in eternal life and the preservation of existence as a human being—because the people promoting these ideas and the those who commit themselves to their teaching are not authentic believers in God and the biblical message.

Also, Peter says that to teach these false ideas which promote immorality rather than moral goodness is, in effect, to “disregard the Master who bought them” (τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς δεσπότην ἀρνούμενοι). It is probably not that these false teachers are explicitly denying Jesus and the cross (as most English translations imply by using “deny” to translate ἀρνούμενοι), claiming that he did not “buy them” (τὸν ἀγοράσαντα αὐτοὺς) as his fellow human beings by dying for them. But they are making a mockery of his claim to be the crucified Messiah by condoning and even promoting sin and rebellion against God among his (supposed) followers. They are disregarding the profundity of his death on the cross and the biblical definition and profundity of their sin. They may even mention Jesus and the cross, but their misunderstanding of the significance of his death will, in effect, be a refusal to pay attention to him. They disregard what it really means for him to be the Messiah and to have died for them. And they disregard the biblical characteristics and depth of their sin. Therefore, they are ignoring the key element of the cross—that the Messiah has died to be their advocate at the final judgment and to obtain for them mercy *for true sin* so that they acquire eternal life.

Jesus did not die to permit sinners to rationalize sin and to twist it into supposed moral goodness, to call sin goodness and goodness sin. He died to provide a place where sinners can be completely honest about their sins, confess them to God, and obtain eternal mercy and forgiveness from Him as a result. These false teachers are accepting certain ideas taught by the Bible, but they reject other ideas—because they do not suit their personal, religious agendas to blend in with the surrounding culture so as to be at least as offensive to the world as possible.

Peter ends this sentence with the fact that these false teachers are doing all this “while bringing imminent destruction upon themselves” (ἐπάγοντες ἑαυτοῖς ταχινήν ἀπόλειαν). The imminence of their destruction is in the fact that God has planned and predestined for them to incur His wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction. In other words, it is guaranteed that they will be destroyed, so that whether this happens in the next moment or many years later, it is still imminent for them. As Paul says in 2:3, “condemnation for them is not lingering for a long time, and their destruction is not nodding off to sleep.”

Another possible clue that Peter is writing to Jewish readers mainly (?) is that he speaks of false prophets among *the people* (ψευδοπροφήται ἐν τῷ λαῷ), so that he feels that he does not have to name these people specifically as the “Jews” or “Israelites.” But we must remember that these people were taught by Peter, James, and John, so that, even if they are Gentiles, they have probably become familiar with OT history.

These false prophets were men who claimed that they were explaining God correctly, as though they were speaking authoritatively and justifiably on His behalf, when they had no clear, biblical nor divine evidence to do so. Therefore, because they were not “moved by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21 – ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι), they were merely *false* prophets.

There is also Jeremiah 26, 7, 8 — “The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Yahweh. When Jeremiah finished speaking all that Yahweh had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, ‘You must die! Why have you prophesied in the name of Yahweh saying, “This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant”?’ And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of Yahweh.”

It is key to note that the false prophets of Jeremiah’s day spoke enthusiastically about Yahweh and put great effort into worshiping Him in Jerusalem in the temple. In line with this, all the rest of the Israelites in the southern Kingdom of Judah were outwardly worshiping God and speaking about Him. However, they all were in fact engaging in great evil by the prophets’ not correctly understanding God and orally representing Him properly to the people, so that they decided to follow these erroneous spokesmen, rather than thinking clearly about what they were saying. In this way, they, like the false teachers who will be among the Christians to whom Peter is writing, “refused to pay attention to the Owner who bought them,” i.e., to Yahweh who eventually through the Messiah would gather sinners to Himself and rescue them from His eternal wrath and condemnation.

In addition, based upon other statements in this letter, these false teachers have been exposed to the message of Jesus as the Messiah and have even appeared to embrace it authentically. However, by virtue of their current perspective that is based upon human and not divine ideas, they have now rejected this message and gone back to focusing on the Mosaic Covenant or pagan worship and behavior—even while continuing to participate in the Christian community and to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. These are either Judaizers who are Judaizing Jewish believers as in Galatians or Gentile believers who once were pagans.

Just as the ramifications for the OT false prophets were condemnation from God, there will be the eternal kind of condemnation for these false teachers who are operating within the Christian community. These false teachers must also be the same people in whom the characteristics of 1:5-7 do not actually exist, no matter how much they may try to give the appearance of such (cf. 1:9). They are probably angry, harsh, and oppressive towards those who disagree with them, and not truly humble, loving, and caring like the apostles. Indeed, they are arrogant narcissists who try to act like humble servants of God. But their message that promotes rebellion against God reveals their true nature.

Cf. Galatians 1:8,9 – 1:8 However, even if we or the *angelos* from heaven were to proclaim to you a message of good news that is the opposite of that which we did proclaim to you, let him be eternally condemned. 1:9 As we have said before and now I am saying again, if someone proclaims to you a message that is contrary to what you embraced, let him be condemned.

²³ καὶ πολλοὶ ἐξακολουθήσουσιν αὐτῶν ταῖς ἀσελγείαις δι’ οὓς ἡ ἰσχύς τῆς ἀληθείας βλασφημηθήσεται – Unfortunately, these false teachers in the midst of the Christians will have a negative effect on their community of believers. They will be quite persuasive, as well as, we can assume, playing to the desires of sinners and convincing them to fulfill their desires outside the boundaries of God’s moral commandments. As a result, “many will follow their licentiousness” (πολλοὶ ἐξακολουθήσουσιν αὐτῶν ταῖς ἀσελγείαις).

Peter labels these false teachers as leading people to ταῖς ἀσελγείαις. Jude 4 also uses the word, “For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons (ἄσεβεις) who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness (ἀσελγεία) and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ [NAS95].” The word refers to a person’s thinking and his actions as opposite of ἀρετή. If ἀρετή ultimately is perfect rational thinking and perfect moral behavior, then ἀσελγεία is thinking and acting that goes beyond the boundaries of rationality and biblical morality. It means the lack of moral restraint and is when a sinner thinks that he has the moral license to do whatever he wants—even to do that which is clearly outside the boundaries of God’s moral commandments. This kind of people pursue evil thinking and behavior without any restraint. And the false teachers

obviously regard the true message of Jesus the Messiah as erroneous, thus distorting the ideas in the Bible, while also claiming to be Christians and to be definitely and completely committed to God.

If these false teachers come from the Jewish sector of society, then the evil that they pursue with total abandon is *religious adherence to the Mosaic Covenant* that may include the same kind of worldly immorality (financial cheating, sexual immorality, etc.) of which the OT prophets accused the Israelites (cf. Jeremiah 23:9ff.), but it does not have to. It could be just a commitment to a religious lifestyle that lacks a proper understanding of God, because these people grab certain ideas from the Bible, using them to promote a kind of Christianity that suits their emotional needs, while then ignoring other ideas in the Bible that would fill out their understanding, but are simply unattractive to them. Thus, their *ἀσέλγεια* is a complete lack of intellectual and moral self-restraint when it comes to thinking rightly, authentic morality. Consequently, they exhibit a commitment to religion that is devoid of authentic faith.

However, the real immorality for these Jewish false teachers would be their thinking that they are good enough to make themselves worthy of God's blessings and even mercy, which is a contradiction in terms. Modern Christians do the same thing by talking about God's "honoring" their actions that will result in His blessing them. Earned mercy is a biblical oxymoron, because even the condition for obtaining God's mercy, changed inwardness and repentance, must be graced and granted by God in order for mercy itself to be graced. Thus, God's grace through and through is the only ultimate and efficient cause not only of the human condition required to obtain God's mercy, but also of the divine dispensing of mercy.

If these false teachers come from the Gentile sector of society, then their evil that they pursue without any self-restraint is thinking like pagan idolators and acting like them, too. They, too, would consider their religious actions to be sufficient to make themselves worthy of God's blessings and mercy, and they would also pursue and condone immoral behavior that falls outside the boundaries of God's moral commandments, such as any kind of sexual immorality as well as financial immorality. They exhibit a complete lack of moral self-restraint that is devoid of authentic faith. And because of their view of God and Jesus, they and those who follow them will malign the truth of the apostolic message. For example, they will consider it unloving to criticize homosexuality, because they will believe that any two human beings who "love" one another may be a legitimate couple in God's eyes. They may even claim that homosexuality is a good example of God's creativity.

In addition, because these Jewish and Gentile false teachers are promoting a false way of understanding God, Yahweh, and the Messiah, they and those who follow them will treat the true way of understanding God disrespectfully (δι' οὗς ἡ ὁδὸς τῆς ἀληθείας βλασφημηθήσεται), because it will not fit with their man-made agenda and intentions for how to teach and follow the Bible. Therefore, in the midst of teaching the Bible, they will actually be rejecting the Bible!! They will refuse to accept certain key ideas of the Bible and will use only those ideas that suit their selfish purposes for creating out of the Bible a religion called "Christianity" that lacks the key intellectual and moral elements of the gospel and the biblical message. The result will be that those who follow them will commit the same error of treating disrespectfully the actual truth of the Bible, even while claiming to teach the Bible. Their disrespectful treatment of God and His prescribed way of truth will manifest itself in both what they say and what they do, in how they speak about the biblical message and how they obey (or fail to obey) it.

²⁴ καὶ ἐν πλεονεξία πλαστοῖς λόγοις ὑμᾶς ἐμπορεύσονται. οἷς τὸ κρίμα ἔκπαλαι οὐκ ἀργεῖ καὶ ἡ ἀπόλεια αὐτῶν οὐ γνυστάζει – Peter indicates that "lack of respect for proper boundaries" (πλεονεξία) is what motivates these false teachers as they "sell" (ἐμπορεύσονται) their man-made (instead of God-made) teaching to these Christians. They really do not care about what the biblical boundaries of morality are. Indeed, they want to stretch those boundaries beyond what we should as human beings and condone behavior that is clearly biblically immoral.

Πλεον, like πλεων, is the comparative of πολὺς, which means "much." Εξία comes from ἔχων. Thus, the word πλεονεξία literally means "having more than much," i.e., going beyond the proper boundaries of something. The false teachers "sell" either their erroneous perspective on the Mosaic Covenant or their pagan thinking and immorality, hoping to ingratiate themselves to their listeners and gain their support so as to retain them as followers, while probably also being supported by them financially.

Peter also says that their ideas and statements (λόγοις) about God are man-made (πλαστοί), as I have translated it. They are more than false ideas and statements. They are invented by human beings (or by Satan who influences sinful human beings to subscribe to them). We get our word "plastic" from this Greek word. The statements that these false teachers make about God come from ideas that they shape and mold apart from taking God into account and apart from the truth of the Bible. Thus, their statements serve only their own self-interests and not God's, as was the case for the false prophets in OT times.

For example, Jeremiah 23:16, "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are leading you into futility. They speak a vision of their own imagination (בְּחֵן לִבָּם = a vision of their heart) (ὄρασιν ἀπὸ καρδίας αὐτῶν = from their hearts), not from the mouth of Yahweh (מִפִּי יְהוָה לֹא) (οὐκ ἀπὸ στόματος κυρίου).'" God is saying that the "prophets" (those who speak on behalf of God) are morally obligated to get their information about what is true for His people and their relationship with Him straight from His mouth. He must speak it, they must hear it, and then they have the right to pass it on to His people, the Jews. But if they conjure up ideas about Him and their relationship to Him in their own heads without actually receiving these ideas from His mouth, i.e., from His speaking them to them, then their ideas and words are "plastic" and man-made.

Peter ends this verse by speaking that God's justice, condemnation, and eventual destruction is "not lingering for a long time" (ἔκπαλαι οὐκ ἀργεῖ). It is just over the horizon, to use a similar metaphor. Plus, their destruction is "not nodding

off to sleep” (οὐ ἴνυστάζει). God’s bringing about the end of their existences remains awake and alive. He is not falling asleep so that they will be able to get away with their irrational and immoral thinking. God is being patient, but eventually His patience is going to run out, and He will destroy them.

²⁵ Εἰ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἀγγέλων ἀμαρτησάντων οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ ῥσειραῖς ζόφου ταρταρώσας παρέδωκεν εἰς κρίσιν ἑτηρουμένους – This verse begins a series of four protases, “if” statements, that express the condition for what Peter will present as the apodosis in 2:9ff, “then the Lord knows...”

Anchor Bible Dictionary, [Dead, Abode of the] “In 2 Pet 2:4 mention is made of casting rebel angels into Tartarus. In classical Greek mythology murky Tartarus was said to be as far below Hades as earth is below the heavens, so much so that an anvil could fall for nine days and nights until it reached it. Tartarus is described as a prison with gates, and it too is personified (Homer Iliad 8.13–16; Hesiod Theog. 713–35).”

BDAG – Tartarus, thought of by the Greeks as a subterranean place lower than Hades where divine punishment was meted out, and so regarded in Israelite apocalyptic as well.

Clearly, these *angeloi* (angels) are sinful beings who deserve God’s condemnation and destruction. But exactly who are they? Certainly, they are not theophanies or manifestations of Yahweh like the *angelos* of the burning bush of Exodus. Assuming that Peter is presenting these examples in chronological order, these would have to be beings who existed prior to Noah and who demonstrated rebellion against God. Are they the Nephilim and “sons of God” (בְּנֵי־הַאֱלֹהִים) (οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ) of Genesis 6:1,2,4? Probably not, because it makes the most sense that the “sons of God” were great men and rulers who were seen as their chief god’s proxy, not angels *per se*, because they had children by women of their day. Can angels really have sexual relations with human women and thus bear children? Does not seem reasonable. The point of Genesis 6:1,2,4 is that these powerful men saw women as objects to be taken, as many as they could acquire as wives (בָּרָאָה) (γυναίκας), and used for their own selfish ends. In this way, the “daughters of men” were “good” (טוֹבָה) (καλαί), so that they took “whomever they chose” (וְכִלְכְּלוּ לָנָפְלִים) (ἀπὸ πασῶν ὧν ἐξελέξαντο).

Perhaps, the *angeloi* were self-proclaimed human messengers of God who attempted to explain the nature of reality on the basis of their own selfish minds and hearts, because they were not “moved by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21 – ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι), i.e., OT “prophets,” but false prophets who lived prior to Noah. However, Peter seems to mention all the unbelievers of Noah’s time in v. 5, thus making the latter different from the *angeloi* of v. 4, unless he goes back in time with this second example in v. 5.

Or, and most likely, the *angeloi* were simply invisible, angelic beings who were rebels against God as Satan, their leader and arch adversary of God, has been. However, because they do not die, they were relegated to a location within the created reality where they are being kept for their own final judgment that will result in eternal destruction. The definite inference from this passage in 2 Peter is that these *angeloi* still exist in a prison-like location until the final “judgment” takes place. Is this “final judgment” the same “final judgment” that human beings will experience, or is it simply a judgment-like experience where the *angeloi* will eventually suffer destruction as rebellious human beings will also? It probably does not matter, but Revelation 20 seems to indicate that the final judgment of Satan, rebellious angelic beings, and unbelieving human beings takes place at the same time—at the end of the millennial kingdom with the Great White Throne Judgment.

The point is that God did not overlook the evil behavior of these rebellious beings, and His intent is to condemn and destroy them eventually.

Thus, Tartarus is probably the same as the abyss of Luke 8:31 when the demons beg Jesus not to command them to go into the abyss, where, it is assumed, they would have to remain until the final judgment. And it is the same as the abyss of Revelation 20:1-3 where Satan will be thrown and kept from influencing the world during the millennial kingdom. [Luke 8:31](#) They were imploring him not to command them to go away into the **abyss** (εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον). [Revelation 9:11](#) They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss (τὸν ἄγγελον τῆς ἄβυσσου); his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. [Revelation 20:1](#) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the **abyss** and a great chain in his hand...3 and he threw him into the **abyss**, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. It is the not the same, however, as Gehenna in Matthew 10:28, which was the burning garbage dump outside Jerusalem and refers to eternal destruction after the judgment and not to a temporary holding place until the judgment.

[Matthew 10:28](#) “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (ἐν γέεννῃ).

²⁶ καὶ ἀρχαίου κόσμου οὐκ ἐφείσατο ἀλλὰ ὄγδοον Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα ἐφύλαξεν κατακλυσμὸν ἑκόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξας – Assuming that Peter is continuing the “if” (εἰ) statement he began in the previous verse, he says that another condition of the point he is making is, “if God did not refrain from dealing with the ancient world,” (καὶ ἀρχαίου κόσμου οὐκ ἐφείσατο). If the sinful human beings who were not believers during the time of Noah received from God His earthly act of condemnation by putting them to death by means of a flood (κατακλυσμὸν ἑκόσμῳ ἀσεβῶν ἐπάξας), i.e., water in this case (just as He then brought judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with fire (cf. 2:6), which will be the same pattern that Peter mentions in 3:5-7 regarding the “world” of Noah and eventually “the heavens and the earth” which is still future to us), then...

But there is another important element to this condition, that God “nevertheless preserved Noah, a proclaimer of

righteousness, with seven others” (ἀλλὰ ὄγδοον Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα ἐφύλαξεν). If God did this, too, during human history as recorded in Genesis 6-9, then...

And Peter identifies Noah as a “proclaimer of righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα) and the other people of the world as ἀσεβῶν (ἀσεβει in the nominative plural), the ungodly who were “not properly worshiping God” and did not include Him and His thoughts and truth in their understanding of reality. This latter term has the same root as that which Paul uses in [Romans 1:18](#) “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσεβειαν) [those who do not properly worship God] and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Accordingly, Noah preached goodness and morality by his words and actions, while the other people ignored biblical morality and refused to take God into account when they were choosing what to think and do.

Thus, in chronological order, Peter refers to another incident in the past in OT history where God dealt with rebellious beings. This time it is human beings whom he put to death by means of a flood (water). But an additional note is that God rescued a man, Noah, and his family, who we assume were all inwardly changed and authentic believers in God. Certainly, Noah was as someone who communicated God’s righteousness by his life. And in this case, in contrast to all the *angeli* who are mentioned in 2:4, God saved Noah and his family from the flood that destroyed the rest of mankind who were evil and refused to obey God by repenting and pursuing morality (Genesis 6-9).

²⁷ καὶ πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας [καταστροφῇ] κατέκρινεν ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἄσεβ[σ]ιν τεθεικώς – Assuming that Peter is still continuing the “if” statement he began two verses earlier, he says that another condition of the point he is making is, “if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by turning them into ashes” (πόλεις Σοδόμων καὶ Γομόρρας τεφρώσας [καταστροφῇ] κατέκρινεν), i.e., with fire, then...

This event is described in Genesis 19.

Peter also says that God “appointed [these cities] an example for future people who do not properly worship God” (ὑπόδειγμα μελλόντων ἄσεβ[σ]ιν τεθεικώς). One question is, when did God “appoint” these cities as an example? Or should I translate τεθεικώς as “having made” or “having provided”? I wonder if the perfect tense is meant to indicate that this took place before God condemned the cities and destroyed them, because κατέκρινεν is aorist tense. It fits that God as the author of the story of this creation did compose it so that He intended, before He brought the creation into existence, that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah be a lesson for the rest of history. Therefore, just as God has appointed some people to eternal life and others to eternal destruction, He planned that Sodom and Gomorrah be cities which clearly demonstrate His wrath and justice towards sinners.

Again, in chronological order, Peter refers to a third event in OT history where certain beings meet with God’s condemnation and a second event whereby a minority of folks escaped the destruction that God brought on those who had rejected Him as their God. In this case, it was Lot (as Peter will go on to say in v. 7), Abraham’s nephew, along with the rest of his family, who were spared physical death when God rained fire and brimstone down on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah along the Dead Sea (cf. Genesis 19).

Peter says that God was using His treatment of the evil people of Sodom and Gomorrah as proof of His justice that will extend to anyone else future to these people, if they continue in their rebellion against God and “do not properly worship God” like those in these two cities. Nevertheless, God will also rescue from His condemnation those who have authentic belief in Him. These two responses to people, condemnation/destruction and salvation/preservation to life, are God’s pattern with this world, and this pattern will find its ultimate fulfillment at the final judgment. Sinners who are appointed to eternal destruction will meet with such, and sinners who are destined for mercy will obtain it and eternal life.

cf. Jeremiah 23:14 - ...All of them [the false prophets in the southern Kingdom of Judah] have become to Me like Sodom and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

Therefore, indeed, these OT stories are clear and sufficient evidence of God’s justice and should serve as adequate examples (ὑπόδειγματα) for all future generations of Jews and Gentiles to warn them away from false ideas and disobeying God—including by picking only certain ideas in the Bible to teach while ignoring and rejecting other ideas.

²⁸ καὶ δίκαιον Λὼτ καταπονούμενον ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ ἀναστροφῆς ἐρρύσατο – See comments above regarding ἀσελγείᾳ in 2:2—a lack of moral self-restraint such that people act beyond the boundaries of God’s moral commandments as they seek to satisfy their human desires.

On the one hand, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the other hand, He rescued righteous Lot (δίκαιον Λὼτ...ἐρρύσατο), just as He saved Noah and his family from the destruction of the rest of the world by the flood. Again, we see God’s pattern here. “Righteous” people live in the midst of “unrighteous” people, and God rescues the first from destruction while subjecting the second to it. In these two cases, the destruction and rescue was within the history of the present world. The example is for those who are either facing eternal destruction or obtaining eternal mercy and life that will come about when Jesus returns, establishes the millennial kingdom, and participates in the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20.

Just as Noah was a “proclaimer of righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης κήρυκα), Lot was “righteous” (δίκαιον) in his day, i.e., a man who pursued biblical morality and exemplified this to the people around him. In addition, he felt the effect of being surrounded by people who had no compunction about behaving in an openly immoral manner in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Indeed, he felt beat down, oppressed, and tyrannized emotionally and psychologically to the point of being worn out by the arrogance and proliferation of the evil and lack of moral restraint that surrounded him (καταπονούμενον ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀθέσμων ἐν ἀσελγείᾳ ἀναστροφῆς). Perhaps, Lot even felt tempted to engage in the evil of his day because of his own sinfulness. Thus, his struggle was not only with the immorality outside of him but

also with the immorality inside of him as people around him fulfilled their insatiable desires through behavior that was outside the boundaries of God's moral commandments.

Here δίκαιον, along with δίκαιος and δικαίαν in the next verse, refer to Lot's being correctly oriented towards God inwardly, such that he had a desire for biblical, moral goodness instead of evil, in spite of his own sinfulness. In other words, he was a genuinely, divinely changed man who had authentic belief. In the same way, the ἀδίκους of v. 9 are those who remain oriented away from God in the midst of their sinfulness.

Peter uses the word ἀναστροφή, which I have translated "way of life," six times in 1 Peter. In this letter he uses it twice. Here and in 3:11 Because all these things are being destroyed in this way, what kind of people is it necessary for us to be in the midst of ways of life and respectful actions that are set apart (ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις).

²⁹ βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ ὁ δίκαιος ἐγκατοικῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ψυχὴν δικαίαν ἀνόμοις ἔργοις ἐβασάνιζεν – See notes in previous verse, but Peter is providing this analysis as an additional parenthetical statement. Lot was a "righteous man" (ὁ δίκαιος), and as he lived in Sodom among unbelievers (ἐγκατοικῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς), he saw and heard how the other people lived and talked (βλέμματι γὰρ καὶ ἀκοῇ). And because he was attuned to God's righteousness and observed the "lawless deeds" (ἀνόμοις ἔργοις) of the people, "he felt his righteous existence tormented day after day" (ἡμέραν ἐξ ἡμέρας ψυχὴν δικαίαν...ἐβασάνιζεν).

Thus, Lot's "existence" (ψυχὴ) was one of a person who has been inwardly oriented towards God by the Spirit of God, while, by inference, those of the other people in Sodom were oriented away from God. Therefore, they engaged in actions which were not legally sanctioned by God, which touched something deep within Lot and disturbed him. His "righteous existence" was greatly disturbed by their unrighteous deeds. The word βασανίζω is used in the synoptic gospels to refer to the torment caused by demons. However, in this case, the same kind of internal emotional, psychological, and spiritual torment comes from the juxtaposition of goodness (Lot's authentic belief and desire to obey God appropriately) and evil (the people's disregard for God and biblical morality). This is genuine pain that arises in a believer from the moral discrepancy between what a person believes as a result of the Spirit of God and what other people believe and do as a result of their unwillingness to take God into account when they are thinking about the nature of reality and how to act in accordance with God's commandments.

And it would seem that a person's experiencing this kind of inner turmoil is intended to indicate to him that he has genuine, biblical faith. Therefore, we should not shy away from it when it arises within us as Christians. If the evil in this world bothers us, it should, and we can take heart that God will not let people get away with their willful sin. Plus, He will grant mercy to those of genuine belief—as Peter goes on to say.

³⁰ οἶδεν κύριος εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ ἁπειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι. ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν – Here is the beginning of the apodosis, that which results from the conditions Peter has mentioned in the several (or long) protases (protasis) in the previous verses. Therefore, I have translated this verse by starting with the word "then."

Peter ultimately puts the responsibility for the outcome of people's lives in response to the evil around them and in them squarely on the shoulders of God. The key words are, "then [as the beginning of the apodosis] the Lord knows how..." (οἶδεν κύριος). Peter is referring not just to a technique that God knows how to accomplish, but to the fact that this is exactly what He has purposed to do and will bring about according to His sovereign plans. In other words, God knows how to do these two things in this verse because He has planned from eternity past to do them.

And what has He planned to do which He knows how to do and will do? The first is "to rescue those who properly worship God from temptation" (εὐσεβεῖς ἐκ ἁπειρασμοῦ ῥύεσθαι). God knows how and plans to make sure that Christians have sufficient inwardness and strength to fend off the lies and deceptions of the false teachers, no matter how attractive their licentious behavior may be for the purpose of satisfying their own desires, which I think Peter is assuming would render their belief false, thus disqualifying them from eternal salvation.

It is God who knows how to make people survive the temptation towards evil and the testing of their belief when they persistently encounter the unpleasant evil surrounding them by causing them to persevere in their belief. Therefore, Peter is talking about the same kind of temptation (ἐκ ἁπειρασμοῦ) that Jesus is in the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," i.e., abandoning our faith.

The second thing that God has planned to do and which He consequently knows how to do is to "keep for the day of judgment the unrighteous who will be punished" (ἀδίκους δὲ εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως κολαζομένους τηρεῖν). Implied is that God has appointed and predestined certain people to eternal destruction because of their sin. Therefore, it is He who knows how to make people continue in their rebellion against Him with the final result that He punishes them with eternal destruction.

Thus, this verse is one of the most encouraging in the Bible, if a person adequately understands the depth of his own sinfulness and human susceptibility to abandon belief in God in the midst of the various pressures of life here on earth and to give up embracing God as his ultimate desire. For example, in the midst of intense pain, a person will naturally want immediate relief from the pain rather than wait for escaping from God's eternal condemnation in the distant future. Likewise, in the midst of intense temptation, a person will want immediate satisfaction of the immoral impulse rather than future escape from God's eternal condemnation. In addition, in the midst of surrounding, unpleasant immorality and lack of moral self-restraint by his culture, a person will think about giving up on God who has promised relief from this unpleasantness and discomfort—because it feels just too far off. Peter is saying that God has planned and will fulfill His plan to make sure that authentic Christians, those who are properly worshiping God (εὐσεβεῖ), will reach their goal of eternal life, no matter how difficult their earthly circumstances.

But similarly, God has predestined certain sinners to live their entire lives disregarding and rejecting Him. It is these

people whom God also knows how to make sure they never become believers so as to incur His judgment, condemnation, and appropriate punishment that will end in complete destruction.

³¹ μάλιστα δὲ τοὺς ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἴμιασμοῦ πορευομένους καὶ κυριότητος καταφρονούντας. τολμηταὶ ἀυθάδεις, ἡ δόξας οὐ τρέμουσιν βλασφημοῦντες – Peter adds another description for the “unrighteous” of v. 9. I think that μάλιστα here means “certainly” and not “especially” since all those who are and remain in the category of the “unrighteous” will be punished by God. Therefore, Peter is saying, “certainly” (μάλιστα) God will punish the latter people of v. 9.

He begins his description by saying that they “proceed in their lives” (πορευομένους) “behind the leading of the flesh” (ὀπίσω σαρκὸς) “in its passion for uncleanness” (ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἴμιασμοῦ). Peter is probably using the word “flesh” with the same meaning as Paul in Romans 8, that this is that aspect of us as sinful human beings that, by virtue of the way God creates us, is just plain sinful and never changes, even after we become Christians. Thus, “flesh” of the “unrighteous” includes strong desires and passions that lead them towards unclean and immoral actions that are contrary to God’s moral commandments. These passions are so strong and it becomes so difficult to restrain themselves that the unrighteous find themselves making the freewill choice to fulfill them in an immoral manner.

In addition, Peter says that they “care nothing for authority” (κυριότητος καταφρονούντας). The “unrighteous” are completely ignoring the clear authority and right that God, His Messiah, and the apostles have to correct and instruct them in their understanding of reality. This is their disregard for God and unwillingness to include Him in their search for truth, so that they end up believing lies.

Thus, they are “reckless, self-willed people” (τολμηταὶ ἀυθάδεις). They do not mind risking their eternal destiny for the sake of satisfying the human desires through actions which are immoral. And they do so out of their own self-willed choice that ignores God and His instructions that come to us through the Bible.

And “they do not tremble when the treat disrespectfully glorious things” (δόξας οὐ τρέμουσιν βλασφημοῦντες). The tough question to answer is, who or what are the “glorious things” (δόξας) which the “unrighteous” malign and treat disrespectfully? EBD – four options,

- 1) Roman Empire authorities,
- 2) church leaders,
- 3) good angels,
- 4) fallen angels.

And the commentator chose #4, that the false teachers malign fallen angels, while good angels in v. 11 do not condemn the fallen angels before God, even though they have the right to and are stronger than the fallen angels. But what would be Peter’s point in saying this? It really does not make any sense.

Peter used the plural of δόξα in 1 Pet. 1:11 “seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας). Here, “glories” refer to the wonderful things involved in Jesus’ return and establishing the Kingdom of God, where these things involve moral perfection for believers according to the proper definition of biblical morality. This makes more sense for interpreting the word in 2 Peter 2:10, that the false teachers treat disrespectfully the glorious things surrounding Jesus’ return because they are so focused on justifying their immoral behavior and satisfying their human passions through immoral means. God’s whole point of the creation, to bring about His eternal kingdom with Jesus’ ruling over it and with his followers being biblically morally perfect beings, falls by the wayside in their theology to the extent that they basically blaspheme against it by ignoring it and rejecting biblical morality. And they are so reckless and self-willed, thinking that they are so strong and capable of doing the right thing as human beings, that they fail to take into account the fact that there are actually stronger created beings who could condemn them before God but do not (v. 11).

The plural of δόξα is also found in Jude 8 “Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile glorious things” (δόξας δὲ βλασφημοῦσιν). Since Peter and Jude probably taught together in Jerusalem, it seems reasonable to conclude that they are using these words with the same meaning. Peter will go on in chapter 3 of 2 Peter to talk about the future “new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells,” saying that people in the last days will mock and ridicule this idea as they focus on fulfilling their sinful desires now.

While these false teachers should be shaking in their boots whenever they reject the truth of God which He has revealed through Jesus the Messiah and through his apostles such as Peter, James, and John, who personally heard God speak on the Mt. of Transfiguration, they go on living as though nothing is wrong with how they live, act, and speak in an immoral way. As “false teachers,” they may even think that they are being very respectful towards God. This is how blind they are to their own sin. They are pretending to be good when they are unwilling to understand what biblical goodness is really all about as they treat God with insolence and insubordination.

³² ὅπου ἄγγελοι ἰσχυροὶ καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες οὐ φέρουσιν κατ’ αὐτῶν ἵπαρα κυρίου βλάσφημον κρίσιν – While sinful and “unrighteous” human beings are reckless enough to speak disrespectfully of God, there are beings within the creation who are stronger and more powerful than they are (ἰσχυροὶ καὶ δυνάμει μείζονες ὄντες), angels (ἄγγελοι), who do not denounce and condemn them before God for it (οὐ φέρουσιν κατ’ αὐτῶν ἵπαρα κυρίου βλάσφημον κρίσιν)—when, I guess, it would be completely permissible for them to do so. These *angeloi* “do not produce a denouncing judgment” against the false teachers who are rebelling against God in the midst of their teaching the Bible.

Again, we have more information in this statement about Peter’s cosmology. There are invisible beings, *angeloi*, who

have a kind of access to God such that they could go before Him and appeal to Him to deal immediately with these false teachers who are rebels against God. The inference is that, instead, these *angeloi* are waiting patiently for God's final judgment.

Peter is also saying that these invisible beings are, in some sense, more powerful than human beings, which seems to give them to right to go before God and express their opinions about these rebellious people.

³³ Οὔτοι δὲ ὡς ἄλογα ζῶα 'γεγεννημένα φυσικὰ' εἰς ἄλωσιν καὶ φθορὰν ἐν οἷς ἀγνοοῦσιν βλασφημοῦντες, ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν 'καὶ φθαρῆσονται' – Peter likens the “unrighteous,” both the false teachers and those who follow them, to “irrational animals” (ἄλογα ζῶα). This is to say that animals do not think when they act. They behave simply on the basis of their instincts and physical desires. If wild animals are hungry, then they kill and eat. Etc. They have no moral compass. They have only their physical desires which they seek to fulfill in whatever manner they have available. They are not asking themselves, “Is this the right thing to do before God?” They are only asking themselves, “How can I fulfill this physical desire?”

Peter also indicates that the “natural order of things” (φυσικὰ) for animals is that they “have been born... for the purpose of being captured and destroyed” (γεγεννημένα... εἰς ἄλωσιν καὶ φθορὰν). This is not because this is what animals deserve, but because this is the way God has designed reality and the story of animals. They are domesticated when it is possible, and sometimes they are killed and eaten. If they are wild and inedible, they are killed and disposed of.

The main point is that animals are not human beings and destined for eternal life because of their moral value to God. But, as Peter indicates, if human beings act like animals, not thinking about God when they make moral decisions but simply seek to fulfill their insatiable desires however they want, including in immoral ways, then they deserve nothing less than to be “destroyed in the midst of their corruption” (ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν 'καὶ φθαρῆσονται)—just as the people were in the examples of Noah and the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. As Peter says, “they treat disrespectfully things of which they have no good intellectual grasp” (ἐν οἷς ἀγνοοῦσιν βλασφημοῦντες). Rather than do all they can to find out from God how to live good, moral lives, they willfully ignore Him and choose to do whatever they want in order to satisfy their desires.

Animals cannot weigh the moral quality of their choices. If they desire to eat, they pursue eating, regardless of the means and consequences by which they go about fulfilling their desire. If they desire to have sex, they pursue having sex, regardless of the means and consequences by which they go about fulfilling their desire. If they desire to get from point A to point B, they pursue making the journey, regardless of the means and consequences by which they go about fulfilling their desire. If people act in this way, they are refusing to pay attention to God and His moral commandments. The means and consequences of their actions, especially the eternal consequences, are of no concern to them. The end justifies the means.

Peter also indicates that the thinking and behavior of these rebellious people are nothing less than irrational (ἄλογα). Their thinking and actions defy logic, when the truth of God and His justice and mercy are taken into account. In other words, it makes no sense that people would pursue immorality in the light of who God is and what He threatens, which is His justice, of which Paul tells us in Romans 1 everyone is aware. As a result, these irrational, human rebels against God will be hunted by Him and destroyed eternally by Him. This is to say that God will basically scour the earth looking for them and will destroy them once He finds them. And as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:8, “to [this end] they were appointed.”

Peter also indicates that their statements about reality and their actions which fit their understanding constitute a total disrespect for truth. In his day and among his readers, these are Jews who speak confidently about the importance of following the Mosaic Covenant, but they basically are intellectual morons while claiming to be so smart. They could also be Gentiles who practice pagan idolatry and pursue immoral behavior that was condoned and even encouraged by their atheistic religions—according to the spirits of Baal, Ishtar, and Molech.

The outcome of these people's lives as human beings who are motivated to think, speak, and act irrationally will be the disappearance of their very existence when God destroys them in the midst of (and for) their unrepentant moral corruption (ἐν τῇ φθορᾷ αὐτῶν), for “by these things they are corrupted” (ἐν τούτοις φθείρονται).

³⁴ ἀδικούμενοι μισθὸν ἀδικίας, ἡδονὴν ἡγούμενοι τὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τρυφῆν, σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι ἐντρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ῥάπταις αὐτῶν συνεωχούμενοι ὕμιν – τ'κοιουμένοι N² A C 5. 33. 81. 307. 436. 442. 642. 1448. 1611. 1735. 1739. 2344. 2492 Byz latt sy^h co^l txt P⁷² N* B P Ψ 1175. 1243. 1852 sy^{ph} l₋ – While ἀδικούμενοι (= suffering wrong) gets to basically the same thing, κοιουμένοι (=receiving what one deserves) makes more sense, i.e., that unbelievers receive the proper wage of their evil, which is destruction.

The first present participle κοιουμένοι most likely follows the sense of the previous future tense verb φθαρῆσονται. Thus Peter is saying that these people, who are unwilling to obey God, will be paid an appropriate wage for their sinfulness—God's wrath, justice, and being eternally destroyed. And this in the midst of their corruption which they do not cease from pursuing.

Then Peter begins a list of characteristics which identify these false teachers and their followers in more detail—

1) They consider it a delightful aspect of human life that they can respond to their physical desires and do whatever they want to do to satisfy and fulfill them (“they consider it a daily luxury to satisfy their pleasures” (ἡδονὴν ἡγούμενοι τὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τρυφῆν))—all in the name of God and Jesus as the Messiah, this being the case most likely for the false teachers and those “Christians” who follow them.

In Titus 3:3, Paul lists ἡδονή as one of the vices which even he was pursuing as a committed, religious Jew. Thus, it

refers to basic human pleasures that serve people in their disobeying God, whether non-religious or religious pleasures. James mentions these as the source of conflicts between people, probably when the pursuit of satisfying their desires collide with those of others, so that each person will attempt to hinder the other while striving to reach his own selfish goals. In Luke 7:25, Jesus uses τρυφή to refer to the luxury of the wealthy, i.e., their living in comfort as a result of their self-indulgence. Here, Peter is referring to Jewish and Gentile false teachers who consider it a great comfort to pursue satisfying their human religious and physical desires by acting outside the boundaries of God's moral commandments.

2) "Stains and blemishes they revel in their aesthetic deceptions while feasting together with you" (σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι ἐντρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ἁπάταις αὐτῶν συνευωχούμενοι ὑμῖν). The word συνευωχέομαι literally means to "feast together," probably here referring to the shared meal of Christian communities as each commemorated the Last Supper of Jesus and his apostles in order to remind themselves of the significance of his death and resurrection. Looking at other uses of συνευωχέομαι, it could mean simply spending time with others, i.e., hanging out with them, but it probably makes more sense that it is referring to an actual commemorative meal, unless Peter is talking specifically about some kind of kosher meals that Jews had together or Gentile meals that they had together.

One might think that these people who reject truth would shun those who embrace truth. However, Peter claims that they are right there in the midst of authentic believers, even commemorating Jesus' death and resurrection with them, but they are clearly interpreting the opportunity to be together differently. The believers view their time together as genuine acts of worship towards Yahweh and His Messiah. The non-believers view their corporate gatherings as acts of worship towards Yahweh, but, because their thinking is irrational as Peter has explained, their actions bear no authentic spiritual quality. Again, they are acting like spiritually incapable and logically challenged animals. They probably want to look godly but are unwilling to take into account their ungodliness. In this way, they become "stains and blemishes" as they "revel in their aesthetic deceptions" (σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι ἐντρυφῶντες ἐν ταῖς ἁπάταις αὐτῶν). They sully Christian gatherings while they think that they are great people in the midst of their deceiving themselves that what they are doing is actually pleasing to God. They think that if it pleases them, then it must please God. If it feels good to them (and they aren't hurting anybody), then it must feel good to God. If it feels like love, then it must be love. But they are eternally wrong.

³⁵ ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες ῥμεστοὺς ῥμοιχαλίδος καὶ ῥἀκαταπαύστους ἁμαρτίας, δελεάζοντες ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας ἔχοντες, κατάρως τέκνα –

3) Peter next says that these people "have eyes full of adultery and are never ceasing from sin" (ὀφθαλμοὺς ἔχοντες ῥμεστοὺς ῥμοιχαλίδος καὶ ῥἀκαταπαύστους ἁμαρτίας), by which he probably means spiritual adultery and pursuing any kind of sin which will satisfy their human desires, because the latter and not genuine morality is the priority. They are always looking for ways that they can disobey God instead of obey Him, which may include physical adultery as justified and rationalized by them. Thus they "are never ceasing from sin" (ἀκαταπαύστους ἁμαρτίας), meaning that they are never satisfied with moral goodness but must live beyond the boundaries of God's definition of it, enjoying every opportunity they have to ignore God's commandments. This means, too, that they are not repentant of their sin in any substantial way.

4) They spend their time "enticing unestablished persons" (δεδεάζοντες ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους). In the midst of their own immoral pursuits (even while among Christians), they are looking for those, i.e., "unestablished persons" (ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους), people who do not have genuine inwardness and, like them, are Christians only in name, whom they can "entice" (δεδεάζοντες) and lure into their belief system and its way of life—probably thinking that there is always strength in numbers. If a hundred billion people ignore God and act immorally, then they must be right, right?

Peter also uses "unestablished" to refer to these false teachers in **2 Peter 3:15-16, 15** Indeed, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom that was given to him, **3:16** as that which also exists in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things. Contained in the letters are some things hard to understand, which the unlearned and unestablished (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι) distort, just as they do the rest of the writings to their own destruction.

5) They also have "a heart that has been trained in no respect for proper boundaries" (καρδίαν γεγυμνασμένην πλεονεξίας ἔχοντες), meaning that, by not restraining themselves from sin but allowing themselves to pursue it with no limits in sight, going beyond the proper boundaries of biblical morality, they have in a sense trained their inwardness, their minds and wills, to condone and do what is wrong and rationalize it. And this all for their own selfish purposes that have nothing to do with God and who He really is. They want only to fit in with the culture and be popular, not right.

6) They are "children of the curse" (κατάρως τέκνα). There are two kinds of people in this world. Those who will receive God's blessing of eternal life and moral perfection, and those who will receive His curse of eternal destruction. These people are clearly in the latter category, which is what God has planned for them within His story.

These are either false teachers who are claiming that the Mosaic Covenant is more important than the Messiah or false teachers who are claiming that a pagan lifestyle is perfectly permissible to God. Their inner "eyes" so to speak look to commit evil by rejecting the truth of the NT message of the Messiah. They never stop pursuing evil in the midst of hoping to win co-rebels to their cause by encouraging people who are not wholly established in the apostolic message to believe in the nature of reality that has its focus on the Mosaic Covenant or pagan idolatry and not on Jesus.

Ezekiel 16:38 – Thus I will judge you [rebellious Israelites] like women who commit adultery (ἡδονὴν ἡδονῶν) (ἐκδικήσει μοιχαλίδος) or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

Ezekiel 23:45 – But they, righteous men, will judge them with the judgment of adulteresses (ἡδοναῖς ἁμαρτανῶν) (ἐκδικήσει μοιχαλίδος) and with the judgment of women who shed blood, because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

The unwillingness of these false teachers to listen to God results in their being unfaithful to Him, longing constantly to pursue immorality, even religious immorality, and seeking to have others join them in their false worship of God. This will satisfy their greed for human approval, but it will also result in their being judged as rebels by God and receiving the appropriate consequence and “wage” of eternal destruction. Thus, they stand to be cursed and not blessed by God. They are “children of the curse” and not of the blessing of God.

³⁶ καταλείποντες εὐθείαν ὁδὸν ἐπλανήθησαν. ἐξακολουθήσαντες τῇ ὁδῷ τοῦ Βαλαάμ τοῦ Ἑβραίου, ὅς μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν –

7) As those who will be eternally cursed of God, these false teachers and their followers have “abandoned the straight path” (καταλείποντες εὐθείαν ὁδὸν) of moral righteousness as expounded in the Bible. Now they are “wandering aimlessly” (ἐπλανήθησαν), meaning without a proper moral compass that would point them towards doing what is right. Rather than having walked down the road of truth, especially the apostolic truth, which Peter calls straight because of its moral boundaries, keeping immorality outside the road, these teachers of false ideas wander constantly into the rough along the road that is characterized by evil.

They are following the path of the OT false prophet Balaam in Numbers 22-24. Loving “the reward of wrongdoing” (ὁ μισθὸν ἀδικίας ἠγάπησεν), he was originally enticed by the wealth that he would receive from Balak, who hired him to curse the Israelites. But God stopped him on his way to meet Balak and convinced him to say only what He told him. Otherwise, he would have died.

³⁷ ἔλεξεν δὲ ἔσθεν ἰδίας παρανομίας· ὑποζύγιον ἄφωνον ἐν ἀνθρώπου φωνῇ φθεγγόμενον ἐκόλυσεν τὴν τοῦ προφήτου παραφροσύνην – God miraculously communicated to Balaam through a donkey when he was headed towards destruction. Peter’s implication is that only a miracle of God can change these false teachers inwardly so that they appropriately believe and pursue the truth of the apostolic message. Otherwise, they will continue to spew false ideas in line with their immoral passions as he goes on to explain in vs. 17-19.

By using the word παραφροσύνην = insanity, Peter is indicating just how bizarre it is for any human being to oppose God. A person in his right mind humbly and diligently follows God and His moral commandments. A person who is insane proudly follows his own self-created ideas and ignores God and His communication through the Bible.

³⁸ οὐτοὶ εἰσὶν πηγαὶ ἄνυδροι καὶ ὀμίχλαι ὑπὸ λαίλαπος ἐλαυνόμεναι, οἷς ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους τὴν τετήρηται –

8) Peter next uses natural metaphors to highlight the fact that the people who are promoting lies in regard to reality are both empty of good ideas and headed for big trouble. First, they are “waterless springs” (πηγαὶ ἄνυδροι). They think that they are an infinite source of satisfying drinks of good ideas and actions to those who listen to them, but their ideas and behavior are basically without content, because they are false. All they do is make people even more thirsty for biblical goodness, if they are self-aware enough to sense what is really going on inside them. As human beings, we were created by God to find intellectual satisfaction in only the truth. So when someone feeds us lies about what we should think and do, we know we are missing something important. But if we are unwilling to find truth from God, then we remain unfulfilled intellectually and personally.

9) These false teachers are also “dark clouds in the sky” that are being driven along by the winds of a huge storm (). In this case, the storm is the full force of evil in the world that relentlessly assaults the minds and emotions of all human beings.

However, the end result for these people will be the darkness of destruction and annihilation by God. It is for them that “the blackness of darkness has been preserved” (οἷς ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους τὴν τετήρηται). I think that the blackness of darkness is metaphorical for the outcome of these peoples’ lives, that it will be dark with destruction. They will never see light again because God will destroy them at the final judgment.

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not refrain from dealing with *angeloι* who sinned, but instead, having cast them into Tartarus, He delivered them to chains of gloom (σειραῖς ζόφου) where they are being kept for judgment

Jude 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever (ὁ ζόφος τοῦ σκότους εἰς αἰῶνα τετήρηται).

³⁹ ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθεγγόμενοι δελεάζουσιν ἐν ἐπιθυμίαις σαρκὸς ἡσέλγειαῖς τοὺς ὀλίγους [ῥόντως] ἄποφεύγοντας τοὺς ἐν πλάνῃ ἀναστρεφόμενους – ὀλίγους p⁷² n² A B Ψ 33. 436 latt? sy? co? ὀλιγον 2344 latt? sy? co? ὀλιγῶν C P 048. 5. 81. 307. 442. 642. 1175. 1243. 1448. 1611. 1735. 1739. 1852. 2492 Byz I

In 2:14, Peter said that these false teachers entice “unestablished persons” to join them in their disobedience of God and mostly likely succeed. Now, he indicates that they seek to entice and lure “those who barely escape from them who conduct themselves in error” (τοὺς ὀλίγους [ῥόντως] ἄποφεύγοντας τοὺς ἐν πλάνῃ ἀναστρεφόμενους). These would be Christians who are solidly Christians but who are also sinners who can be tempted to behave immorally and may even succumb to this temptation on occasion, while remaining people of changed inwardness who will repent of their sin and seek to do what is right after doing what is wrong. As a result, the believers in a sense barely avoid being swallowed up by the attractiveness of their professional pleadings and rationalizations.

And the false teachers do this “while talking about boastful things that serve no good purpose” (ὑπέρογκα γὰρ ματαιότητος φθεγγόμενοι). If they are Jews, they talk about their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, but they have the wrong perspective, that they can make themselves worthy of God’s blessings while coming across as mostly interested in the ritual commandments, because they are easier to quantify and keep track of. Thus, they focus on their Mosaic

Covenant obedience and not on Jesus. If they are Gentiles, then they rationalize immoral behavior similar to that of their former pagan idolatry, even claiming that God approves of their way of life.

These false teachers, who are driven by their own strong immoral desires that result in actions that are completely outside the boundaries of God's moral commandments (ἐν ἑπιθυμίας σαρκὸς ἄσελγείας), are very persuasive, and the implication is that only a clear grasp of the biblical and apostolic message will prevent someone from concluding that their ideas are true.

Because of what Peter has already argued in 2:9, authentic believers “barely” escape being enticed into rejecting truth by virtue of God's faithfulness to them to cause them to persevere in their belief so as to remain qualified for His eternal mercy and the outcome, eternal life.

⁴⁰ ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελλόμενοι, αὐτοὶ δοῦλοι ὑπάρχοντες τῆς φθορᾶς ᾧ γὰρ τις ἤττηται, τούτῳ ἔδεδούλωται – Peter now says that the false teachers “promise their listeners freedom” (ἐλευθερίαν αὐτοῖς ἐπαγγελλόμενοι). Freedom from what? To be coherent with the phrase “slaves of destruction,” Peter means “freedom from condemnation and destruction” by the word ἐλευθερίαν. The false Jewish teachers are promising the Jewish believers in Jesus the Messiah freedom from God's condemnation by promoting merely the idea of obeying the Mosaic Covenant. And any Gentile false teachers are promising the same in the midst of pursuing lifestyles similar to their former pagan ones.

However, Peter says that these false teachers are “slaves of destruction” (αὐτοὶ δοῦλοι ὑπάρχοντες τῆς φθορᾶς). They cannot keep themselves from doing that which will eventually make themselves worthy of God's destroying them at the final judgment.

And he further explains this dynamic by stating the principle, “because by that which a person is overcome, to this he has been enslaved” (ᾧ γὰρ τις ἤττηται, τούτῳ ἔδεδούλωται). The word ἡττάομαι (=to be defeated, vanquished, conquered) is used only here and in v. 20. It is a military term, probably here referring to the defeat of foreigners by the Roman army who then took these foreigners into slavery for Romans to buy. Thus, if a sinner is conquered by evil, then he will be enslaved by evil. Likewise, if a sinner is conquered by God through the inward work of His Holy Spirit, then he will be enslaved to God and His moral righteousness—even while he continues to be a sinner.

Therefore, these false teachers are slaves of evil who are headed towards eternal destruction at the final judgment of God.

⁴¹ εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τούτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἡττώνται, γέγονεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ἔσχατα χειρόνα τῶν πρώτων – Here we have another “if” statement, “if, after having escaped from the shameful deeds of the world by means of knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Messiah, they have become overcome (ἡττώνται) by them, getting entangled in these things again” (εἰ γὰρ ἀποφυγόντες τὰ μιάσματα τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τούτοις δὲ πάλιν ἐμπλακέντες ἡττώνται).

Peter intimates that the false teachers had at one time appeared to engage the ideas of Jesus as the Messiah in their entirety and to believe them as true (because they had been presented accurately with the whole, “true knowledge” of the biblical message (ἐν ἐπιγνώσει)), thus also presenting themselves as having defeated the ideas and lies of the world in their own minds and actions. But not, if they have become overcome and defeated by these false ideas, so that they are entangled in them once again just as they were before hearing the gospel for the first time, and have returned to promoting and pursuing either only the Mosaic Covenant as Jews or mostly pagan behavior as Gentiles at the expense of embracing fully what it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, then...

Peter says that the result is that, by going back to a raw unwillingness to listen to and obey God, they have made matters worse for themselves. How? It cannot be that they are now more likely to be destroyed by God than they were before they heard the gospel and were already conducting themselves in an immoral and sinful manner. Destruction is destruction, whether it comes as a result of their former lifestyles or their present lifestyles. Therefore, Peter probably means either that, on an existential level, they have made it even more difficult for themselves to see clearly the truth and to embrace it with authentic belief (as they increase their commitment and attraction to their sin—as indicated by the proverbs which Peter cites in v. 22), or that they are adding that much more punishment to the effect of God's justice when He brings this about at the final judgment and before He destroys them (or both).

⁴² κρείττον γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς μὴ ἔπεγνωκέαι τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἢ ἐπιγνοῦσιν ὑποστρέψαι ἐκ τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς ἀγίας ἐντολῆς – Peter speaks of these false teachers having “known the way of dikaiosunay” (τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἢ ἐπιγνοῦσιν), the way to acquire eternal forgiveness of God through Jesus that requires both belief and a biblically moral lifestyle as the necessary condition. They were exposed to the gospel in its fullest form. But he says it would have been “better for them not to have come to know” (κρείττον γὰρ ἦν αὐτοῖς μὴ ἔπεγνωκέαι) it, because now they have turned away from the holy instruction which had been delivered to them” (ὑποστρέψαι ἐκ τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς ἀγίας ἐντολῆς).

This sounds like Hebrews 6:4-6 – 6:4 It is impossible to renew again to repentance those who were once enlightened, such that they have tasted of the gift of heaven, have become partners with the Holy Spirit, 6:5 and have tasted of the good message of God, specifically the significant consequences of it with respect to the coming age, 6:6 and have fallen away, in so far as they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and disgrace him publicly.

The idea that Peter seems to be setting forth is, from a human standpoint, a person is more likely to embrace the biblical message if he has not encountered it before than if he has encountered it and then turned away from it by distorting it. To know the truth and then harden one's heart to it is a greater existential predicament than to have a hard heart and

encounter the truth for the first time. Thus, we can imagine how much energy it is taking for people to be confronted by Christians in their lives on a daily basis and to continue rejecting the truth of their message that they present in their words and actions. It would be better existentially if they lived in a 1st century Roman Empire kind of environment where Jesus in Israel and Paul in the Gentile areas exposed to people for the first time the gospel.

⁴³ συμβέβηκεν τὸ αὐτοῖς τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς παρομιίας· κύων ἐπιστρέψας ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον ἐξέραμα, καὶ ὕς λουσαμένη εἰς κυλισμὸν βορβόρου –

Proverbs 26:11 – Like a dog that returns to its vomit (יִשְׁבֹּבֵץ בִּלְבָבוֹ) (ὡσπερ κύων ὅταν ἐπέλθῃ ἐπὶ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἔμετον) is a fool who repeats his folly.

The point of these parables—if a person is animal-like instead of truly human, then he will not be able to refrain from doing really stupid things in comparison to following the biblical message. Instead of staying away from lies that he may have at first rejected, he will ingest them all over again. Instead of staying away from dirty ideas from which he claimed at first that he has apparently been cleansed of, he will immerse himself in them all over again. Thus, these proverbs have a definite negative connotation. An unbeliever who hears the truth and at first appears to believe it, but who then gives up the truth is like an animal either who eats his own vomit, thus liking something that ought to be repulsive and that he rid himself of in order to feel better, or who, after cleaning the mud of the guilt of his sin off him, then prefers being covered with this same mud of both his guilt and his sin all over again, thus, liking something which he ought to avoid if he were to understand God correctly and have a genuine desire to escape His wrath, condemnation, and destruction.

⁴⁴ Ταύτην ἤδη, ἀγαπητοί, δευτέραν ὁμῖν γράφω ἐπιστολήν, ἐν αἷς διεγείρω ῥύμων ἐν ὑπομνήσει τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν – While “letter” (ἐπιστολήν) is singular, the relative pronoun after “in,” i.e., “which” (ἐν αἷς) is plural, indicating that Peter is referring in the relative clause “in which I am stimulating/waking up...reminder” to both the letters that he wrote to these readers. Thus, it is appropriate to translate the relative pronoun “which” (αἷς) with the word “both.”

Originally, I thought that 1 Peter is written to Gentiles and 2 Peter is written to Jews. If this were the case, then 1 Peter is not the letter which is included in the relative pronoun “which” (αἷς), which would mean that we do not have the first letter to which he is referring here. Nevertheless, if the letter of Paul to these Jews was Hebrews (cf. 3:15), then we could at least conclude that Peter is revealing even more of the situation in this Jewish community, that they have supposed “Christians” right in their midst who are encouraging them to pay more attention to the Mosaic Covenant and its animal sacrifices than to Jesus as the Messiah and the only sacrifice/High Priest that God will accept for granting eternal mercy to sinful human beings. Thus, the persecution to which Paul alludes in Hebrews is definitely coming from the outside, while Peter is talking about pressure from inside their own gathering of believers, i.e., from false teachers who are insistent on preserving the religiosity of the community at the expense of actually pursuing the truth of the Messiah.

However, if 1 and 2 Peter were written to a mixed community of Gentiles and Jews, which is making more sense to me, then 1 Peter is the letter to which Peter is referring here, and the letter from Paul mentioned in 3:15 was also to this mixed community. As a result, we have a situation in these Christian communities in the Asian area of what would be northern and central Turkey where the believers are being persecuted by unbelievers outside their gatherings and strongly deceived by false Christians and teachers within their gatherings. But which letter from Paul was the one mentioned in 3:15? Hard to say.

This is not any different from Christian communities in our day where authentic believers are under attack from the culture because of their biblical morality and where certain churches have diverted from the biblical message and are condoning and encouraging immoral behavior such as homosexuality and sex outside of marriage as if God sanctions them. This is also not different from modern churches who are more interested in maintaining their standing in the church culture by promoting their programs, traditional doctrines, religious ceremonies, status within the Christian world, etc., rather than genuinely being concerned about the biblical message, even while claiming to be all about studying and teaching the Bible.

Peter says that his desire with both letters is to stimulate and/or wake up his readers with respect to what he assumes is their “pure mind,” i.e., their pure motive to think, speak, and act in accordance with the truth of the gospel and not be sidetracked by the errors of these false teachers. Thus, their intention and purpose in life is to remain faithful Christians and acquire eternal life and God’s mercy through Jesus just as God has stated in the Bible and according to the apostolic message which Jesus taught to his disciples. Peter is not teaching his readers anything new. Instead, he is “reminding” them of the same ideas and information that they have already heard and that they should “remember” from what the OT prophets proclaim and what the apostles have repeated to them from what they were taught by Jesus (see the next verse, 3:2).

⁴⁵ μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ῥύμων ἐντολῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτήρος – At the end of chapter 1, Peter alluded to OT prophets who received their messages directly from God, so that their messages were true (in contrast to people who may refer to the Bible, but simply make up ideas that are actually contrary to the Bible) and, in 2:1, he referred to false prophets among the OT Israelites who were the precursors of the false teachers of the NT Christian communities.

Here, Peter wants his readers to “remember the words previously spoken” by the OT prophets and Jesus’ apostles—implying that they have already heard them and learned the truth from them.

While sometimes in the NT the word prophet is used to refer to accurate NT spokesmen, who proclaim the gospel of

Jesus as the Messiah alongside the apostles, it would seem here in 3:2 that Peter is talking about Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah through Malachi, who were “set apart” by God and “previously” proclaimed God’s message about the coming Messiah and God’s restoring the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. Their message would be about Jesus the Messiah’s *parousia* where he makes his grand entrance into the world and into Israel as their champion, king, and priest and restores the Kingdom of David and of Israel—as described, for example, in Jeremiah 23 (“your instruction of your apostles of the Lord and Savior”). In other words, by referencing the Old Testament prophets and encouraging his readers to remember their message, Peter is not at all suggesting or teaching that God changed His mind and transferred the Kingdom of God from the Jews on the land of Israel to the church of the New Testament and to heaven. Instead, Peter is sticking with promises to Abraham as God expressed them in Genesis 12-22.

In addition, Peter is referring to the truth as Jesus himself presented it to his apostles, who then passed it on to others, who, in turn, believed their message. Thus, Peter is declaring that he is saying nothing different from what both the OT and Jesus have taught. As he said in 1:16, he is not speaking of “ingeniously concocted myths” such as the myths of pagan idolatry or of the false teachers of chapter 2 (or of those who change the OT prophets’ message to be speaking of the church and not of the Jews and Israel). Peter is speaking of things that are absolutely true that come from the transcendent creator who has presented His message through the OT prophets, Jesus, and his apostles—and it is all the same message.

And Peter refers specifically to “your apostles.” These are the three men, Peter, James, and John, who presented the NT information to these readers (cf. 1:18-21). He wants to emphasize the relationship between these three men and his readers, because they have spoken the truth to them on behalf of Jesus. It makes sense to qualify “apostles” with the “your” since it is within the boundaries of τῆς and ἐντολῆς even though the Majority Text has ἡμῶν.

All this information to which Peter is referring can be placed under the label “the apostolic message and instruction from God,” which he indicates with the word ἐντολῆς = “commandment” typically. The apostolic message is God’s instruction and commandment to sinful human beings to repent and seek His eternal mercy through Jesus as Messiah and high priest. It is this which Peter wants to urge his readers to remember, so that they not only continue to believe it, but also continue to obey it accurately in its entirety, without wandering off into immoral behavior and false ideas that others are so quick to condone and encourage.

And Jesus is both “Lord,” i.e., Master, and “Savior,” i.e., champion, who has “fought” and will “fight” on their behalf to ensure that their enemies are eventually “vanquished,” so that God grants them eternal mercy and not His eternal justice of destruction. It is true that God is their ultimate enemy, if they were to remain sinfully unwilling to submit to Him. Here, Peter is speaking of their earthly enemies who are hostile to and persecute Jewish and Gentile Christians.

⁴⁶ τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι ἐλεύσονται ἐπ’ ἑσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν [ἐν] ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαίκεται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι – Here Peter presents the “first” thing that he wants his readers to remember and know from what they have learned from the OT prophets and Jesus’ apostles. It is that, “in the last days” (ἐπ’ ἑσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν), during the long period of time between Jesus’ first and second appearances, the false teachers within their communities will dismiss and consider unworthy of strong consideration the truth about Jesus’ grand appearance and return to restore the Kingdom of Israel, along with God’s bringing about His judgment of all human beings and the destruction of those who remain committed to sin and rebellion against Him instead of submitting to the biblical message of salvation from God’s wrath and judgment—as Peter goes on to talk about in 3:4-7. Their own “strong desires” that are stronger than the desire to pursue the totality of biblical truth and morality and to encourage others to pursue the whole message of the Bible will dominate their minds, hearts, and choices.

The nouns ἐμπαίκτης and ἐμπαιγμονή are usually defined as mocking or ridiculing, but certainly these include treating something as unworthy of consideration and dismissing it. It would be to disparage it and think of it as basically shameful, that it is so wrong that it ought to be thrown in the trash heap and put out of one’s mind. I suggest that this is what Peter has in mind, that whether he is talking about false teachers within the Christian community (mainly) or abject unbelievers outside it (by extrapolation), these men are dismissing and discarding at least certain parts of the biblical message and embracing only what they want to fit their goal of gaining people’s admiration and living as they want apart from God’s moral commandments.

Thus, after encouraging his readers to remember certain truths that he mentioned in chapters 1 & 2 and to avoid false teachers who are more about becoming popular by joining with the surrounding culture’s immoral pursuits, Peter now turns towards the more distant future and “first” wants these Christians to remember and know (τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες) that, as the time draws near for Jesus (“the Lord and Savior” of 3:2) to return and make his grand appearance as king and priest (of 3:4), people will come along and deliberately reject the Bible and God’s truth about Jesus’ return and God’s judgment and destruction of ungodly people (ὅτι ἐλεύσονται ἐπ’ ἑσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν [ἐν] ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαίκεται). They will treat the Bible, or at least parts of it, as unworthy of full consideration.

There is the question about exactly whom Peter has in mind—

- 1) Peter is talking about only the same false teachers as chapter 2—actual teachers of the NT message, who have heard this message from the OT prophets and the apostles (or their co-workers)
- 2) He is talking about a separate group of people who, like the false teachers of chapter 2, are fundamentally hostile to the Bible and its message, but they are outside the community of believers—probably not teachers of the NT message and probably have not heard what the OT prophets taught or what the apostles taught
- 3) He is expanding his perspective to include the separate group of #2 and combine them with with the false teachers of #1—worldly people, regardless of what religious community they attend (or do not attend)

My guess is that #1 is correct, Peter is mostly concerned about those who have heard the biblical message but have rejected it—even saying, as in 3:4, “Where is the promise of the Messiah’s *parousia*, because the world just seems to be humming along as it always has?” They are ignoring to a degree particular passages of the Bible while claiming to be serious students and teachers of the Bible. They simply are not embracing all its truth. Instead, they distort it for their own religious, social, or political ends, while being more interested in gaining people’s approval than in embracing and living the biblical truth (cf. Jude 16 ...while admiring faces for the sake of gaining an admiration (my literal translation).

And this will be “in the last days,” which could mean from the time in which Peter is writing all the way to the time when Jesus returns (as Paul uses the same kind of phrase in Hebrews 1:1 (ἐπ’ ἔσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων)), or during only the very last period of time just before his return. It is probably more the former in that it seems the NT authors thought of Jesus’ return as imminent even though they knew it would be a long time before it actually happened. And certainly people, even among those who claim to be Christians, over the last two thousand years have either considered the Bible and its message to be quite foolish or at least parts of it to be quite irrelevant.

Jude 18 that they were saying to you, “In the last time there will those who dismiss, following after their own ungodly strong desires.”

Most likely, Peter’s (and Jude’s) perspective is not global but confined to the Middle East as found even in the OT prophets, e.g., Daniel. Nevertheless, we should not be surprised if there is a worldwide movement throughout history after Jesus’ first coming where false teachers within Christian communities reject parts of the truth of God and the Bible by promoting ideas and behavior that extend beyond the proper boundaries of biblical thinking and morality. Certainly, the Man of Lawlessness, outside the Christian community and mentioned by Paul in 2 Thessalonians, will do so by seeking to exterminate the Jews. But others will do similarly by condoning and promoting behavior that is clearly unbiblical, e.g., abortion and the murder of innocent babies.

It certainly seems that we are seeing such an attitude growing in our own day. And it is vital that Christians remember Paul’s own words in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” While unbelievers will inevitably become ashamed of their commitment to rebelling against God, Paul knows that God will never claim that he blew it and failed to reach his full potential as a sinful human being by embracing the message of Jesus as the Messiah after having been committed to Moses and the Mosaic Covenant only. Paul and Peter will not hang their heads in shame by being authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah, a man who was crucified and then rose from the dead two thousand years before us. Instead, it will be those who reject Jesus who do.

Those who disregard, whether in whole or in part, Christianity and its message of the coming Messiah will simply be proceeding down the path of rejecting God according to their own innate desires to ignore what is good and to do what is evil. These are vessels of wrath according to Paul in Romans 9, who will bring glory to God when He eventually condemns and destroys them.

⁴⁷ καὶ λέγοντες ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ’ ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἔκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως – The false teachers “in the last days” and thus into the distant future will have heard the same message of Jesus’ *parousia* and restoration of the Kingdom of Israel as Peter’s readers from the OT prophets and Jesus’ apostles. But they will find the long (and, in their opinion, inordinate) length of time that God is taking to bring it about a strike against its being true. “Since the fathers fell asleep,” i.e., since previous generations died, maybe even going all the way back to Adam and Eve and certainly Abraham (or just the 1st century Roman Empire Christians), nothing has changed to indicate that God is really at work to bring about the *parousia*. Therefore, they dismiss and reject this all-important truth.

In line with the three options for how to interpret the people of the previous verse, there are three options for what Peter is talking about here –

1) Jews, as the false teachers of chapter 2, who know their OTs and the stories of the “fathers” of the Jews, including that God has promised His own *parousia* by means of the Messiah to restore the Kingdom of Israel, but they have given up on God, because Jesus’ crucifixion proved that he is not the Messiah, thus dismissing the truth about God and Jesus

2) Gentiles and/or Jews, as the false teachers of chapter 2, who have read about the *parousia* of the Messiah in the OT and in Paul’s letters, but who are not very interested in it because, as narcissists, they are more interested in being popular among their students and fellow biblical scholars than they are in God’s bringing about the Kingdom of God

3) Gentiles and/or Jews, as the false teachers of chapter 2, who are speaking in general and saying that the Bible with its message of Christianity is simply a bunch of garbage. In other words, these are people in general who don’t necessarily believe in God as the creator, but who look back at history, the stories of past generations, and believe that the universe will hum along as it is for millions if not billions of years more, so that Christianity and biblical faith are simply a fool’s tale

In the light of my conclusion above that these men are the same as the false teachers of chapter 2, #2 makes the most sense, and it fits nicely with 3:5-6—that just as people are unwilling to acknowledge the full ramifications of the creation and of Noah and the flood of Genesis 6-9, they are also unwilling to embrace exactly what it means for God to have created the cosmos with water involved according to Genesis 1-2, the judgment of God through the flood of water in Noah’s day, and the predictions of the prophets and the NT of Jesus’ return and future judgment of God through destroying people and this cosmos by fire—in spite of the stories of Jesus’ having been resurrected from the dead! As a

result, their strong desires, which are leading them away from the truth, are causing them to be more interested in being popular than in being saved from God's wrath and destruction.

The second option also makes sense in the light of 3:8-10, where the issue of the importance of waiting for God to finish His story when and how He wants, especially because Peter is encouraging his readers to stick to the Bible, in this case to the OT (along with the apostolic message which builds on the OT) with the references to God who has the right to take as long as He wants to tell His story. This, too, should be part of the foundation of any human being's understanding of reality.

I think that the "fathers' falling asleep" is a reference to Jewish OT patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

While it is true that a lot has happened in human and Jewish history since they were alive, these false teachers are not appropriately taking seriously God's promises to Abraham and His responses to his descendants during OT history. As a result, they are not embracing their Bibles, i.e., the OT, as they should.

In addition, "the beginning of the creation" is also a reference to these false teachers' considering the story of the "creation" of the whole cosmos by Yahweh Elohim as having the full ramifications that it does, i.e., that once God began the story, He was committed to finishing the story (even though it actually goes on into eternity).

We can also say that people who disregard a portion of the Bible for their own selfish purposes make themselves a type of atheist, not caring to take into account genuinely all that God presents to mankind through the Bible, His prophets, and especially through Jesus (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3).

Thus, Peter is certainly pointing out the importance of a future-looking perspective by Christians. We are people who are waiting on God, and we are willing to wait as long as we need to for Him to finish His project of bringing about the Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of Israel, which will be the millennial kingdom as described in Revelation 20.

And we can compare these people with the leaders of Israel in Isaiah 56:12, "'Come,' they say, 'let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink. And tomorrow will be like today, only more so.'"

⁴⁸ λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος ἑσυνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ – The verb λανθάνει means that something remains hidden, and, in this case, Peter is probably referring to how these unbelievers are unwilling to recognize that the only reasonable way that this cosmos could exist is if a transcendent creator has brought it into existence—both the heavens and the earth. They subjectively keep this obvious fact hidden from themselves. They "willfully choose this" (τοῦτο θέλοντας), i.e., to ignore the obvious and hide themselves from it.

Could they know this or understand this without reading Genesis 1? Yes, according to Paul in Romans 1:18-21 – **1:18**

For God's wrath is set to be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth with their unrighteousness, **1:19** because what can be known about God is obvious among them, for God made it obvious to them. **1:20** For since the creation of the universe, His invisible qualities, both His eternal power and uncreated-God-ness, have been clearly perceived, because they are intellectually grasped through the things that are created. Therefore, they are without any defense, **1:21** because, while they know about God, they neither ascribe worth to Him as God nor thank Him. Instead, they become worthlessly unintelligent in their reasonings, and their clueless heart is darkened.

And what are they hiding from themselves? Peter goes on to describe it in the rest of v. 5 and also v. 6—"**3:5b** That the heavens have existed from long ago and that the earth was established out of water and through the means of water within the story of God, **3:6** because of which the world at that time was destroyed when it was flooded with water" (**3:5b** ὅτι οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος ἑσυνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ **3:6** δι' ὧν [ὄν] ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο).

In other words, these people fail to take into account that a very important element/aspect of the created reality that God used to form the earth in Genesis 1 was water. Indeed, He "established" the "earth...out of water and through the means of water." Thus, water becomes an integral part of the "story" of God for His additional purposes of judgment and instructing sinful human beings in regard to His moral and just character.

In the v. 6, Peter will go on to point out how this important created element, water, becomes used by God in the flood of Genesis 6-9 in the midst of His judgment of the people of Noah's day. Thus, Peter has been indicating that unbelievers simply do not care to take into account the meaning of all of God's beginning and ongoing creating activity, by which He demonstrates His judgment of sinful people in human history that should motivate Peter's readers to repent and avoid God's judgment themselves. This is what he is pointing out that these people are hiding from themselves—as he has already said in chapter 2.

Consequently, Peter is declaring that the story of the creation and of Noah and the flood is easily accessible to these people ("that the earth was established out of water and through the means of water within the story of God" (καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος ἑσυνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ) because of which the world at that time was destroyed when it was flooded with water" (δι' ὧν [ὄν] ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο))—if they will but search for it among the Jews and in the Bible and embrace it, which not everyone is truly willing to do.

He is saying that people in general, who want to believe that the overall existence of things is never going to change (and that God loves people whom they think are behaving in a permissible, moral manner—when the Bible begs to differ!), are also unwilling to take into account the obvious fact that it was a long time between God's bringing the creation into existence with the important element of water as described by Moses in Genesis 1 and His destroying the earth by flooding it with water during the time of Noah as described in Genesis 6-9. They are rejecting the Bible's message of God's justice and therefore rejecting the transcendent Creator as described by the Bible. They are failing to

acknowledge that these events occurred within the story that God has formulated and is telling by means of cosmic history and that they should take very seriously whatever God has communicated through the Bible, His prophets, Jesus, and his apostles.

Therefore, long times seem to be God's pattern, or at least His right, and everything happens according to the story that God continues to imagine into existence. In other words, coming to grips with what it means for there to be a transcendent Creator whose ongoing actions of making His story exist is essential for understanding and living properly in the reality in which sinful human beings find themselves. Plus, God has demonstrated His justice in addition to His creating power, so that we should all take both these into account. However, people who ignore God, even after He has demonstrated His justice as told specifically by the Bible with events such as the flood of water in Noah's day (and fire in the day of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah, both of which Peter mentions in chapter 2), will suffer His eternal justice, judgment, and destruction. God is not to be ignored, and no part of the Bible is to be trivialized, while the OT prophets are not to be rejected. And, finally, Jesus and his apostles should obviously not be rejected either.

⁴⁹ δι' ὧν [δὲν] ὁ τότε κόσμος ὑδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο – Peter's point is that there is plenty of evidence in the OT regarding God's justice and destruction of human beings who rebel against Him. Should not people take this fact into account while they live out their existences in the present realm that is heading towards the final judgment by God? Absolutely!

And how would people know about the story of the flood? By reading the OT, by conversing with Jews who are familiar with the OT, or by conversing with Jesus' apostles and others who have become believers in him since he first appeared. If people are really interested in truth, then they will do everything they can to search for it and find it. The Majority Text uses δι' ὧν, but δὲν probably makes more sense, that Peter is referring to the λόγος of God, i.e., the story that He imagines into existence. Thus, after the creation of the heavens (and the earth) as told poetically in Genesis 1, God destroyed the earth with the flood of Genesis 6-9 during the time of Noah. In this way, the world that includes human existence went through a radical transition, not that people were any different after the flood, because they all were and are still sinful. Nevertheless, an explicit demonstration of God's wrath, judgment, and destruction had now been made, and the Bible speaks of it as a warning to all who read about it. In the light of this clear demonstration, the Jews as students of the Bible should take God's angry and destructive response to immorality just that much more seriously, and Gentiles, who have access to the Jews and to the message of Jesus through his apostles, should also. However, Peter is saying that they did and do not. Instead, they dismiss and reject God and His truth by either ignoring them completely or by ignoring certain passages of the Bible that are not to their liking. But God will still have the last say in the matter.

Thus, Peter is pointing out the connection between the water of the creation poem of Genesis 1 and its use for the purposes of God's judgment and destruction of unbelievers at the time of Noah. Then 3:7 goes on to indicate that fire, i.e., God's use of a different but equally destructive element in the creation, will be His instrument of choice to judge and destroy unbelievers during the "day of judgment and destruction of men" and the "Day of the Lord" of v. 10. There are two options for understanding what Peter means by this judgment, destruction, and "day"—

- 1) The unbelieving nations and Jews when Jesus returns, where the focus will be on the Middle East and the land of Israel, with collateral damage throughout the rest of the world.
- 2) All unbelievers throughout history at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20.

Paul refers to the first option in [2 Thessalonians 1:6-10](#) — 6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

The vision of Revelation 20 refers to the second option in [Revelation 20:11-15](#) — 11 And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence [face] earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged [punished] from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged [punished], every one of them according to their deeds. 14 And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Even though it seems strange that Peter would completely skip over Jesus' return and the important events that will take place when he does, I think that option #2 is correct, because his purpose is to emphasize for his Christian readers (and for any false teachers among them) God's final and eternal judgment and destruction of sinful unbelievers. Plus, it seems that Peter's description in the ensuing verses pertain more to the judgment of #2, not to that of #1.

⁵⁰ οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν ἑπυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας ὅτων ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων —

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Most Bibles consider the αὐτῷ to be correct and translate it as "same." This makes sense—that Peter is referring to the "same story" in which the events of the flood occurred, even though it certainly is "His" story, i.e., God's story. Thus, within the same story (of God!), the events of another judgment and destruction of the present realm will occur—but

this time, with the destructive force of fire, not water.

Two options for what Peter is talking about here in 3:7-14 –

1) The judgment of God of all unbelieving Jews and some unbelieving Gentiles with His inaugurating the restored Kingdom of Israel as the Millennial Kingdom as described in the visions of Revelation 16:17 through chapter 20, so that “the heavens and earth” as destroyed by “fire” here means a complete reorder of the present realm when Jesus returns, destroys Israel’s enemies in the Middle East, and God destroys unbelieving Jews on the land of Israel and throughout the rest of the world, with some unbelieving Gentiles also being killed.

2) The final, final judgment and complete destruction of the present realm/creation followed by God’s making a whole new creation as described in the vision of Revelation 21-22, so that fire will destroy not just the earth (as the flood did in Genesis 6-9), but also the rest of the universe.

If #2 is correct, then—in the light of the long time between God’s bringing the creation into existence and destroying the earth with its human life with a flood of water during the time of Noah, Peter emphasizes that God’s plan to destroy the entire present creation with fire will still happen. It is as though the present earth and its setup, along with the heavens, are being stored in a safe place for one last act of destruction on God’s part. And God will accomplish this last and final destruction with fire, not water. In addition, like God’s eliminating rebellious human beings from the earth in Noah’s time, He will bring about one last assessment of humanity and will destroy those who have remained unwilling to acknowledge and believe in Him. The implication is, though, that, just as God preserved certain, chosen human beings through the judgment of the flood, He will do the same through the judgment of the fire.

But if #1 is correct, then this fiery destruction of the present realm will be centered in Israel and involve mainly the unbelieving Jews as described, for example in the following passage from Isaiah –

[Isaiah 66:15-17](#) — 15 For behold, Yahweh will come in fire and His chariots like the whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For Yahweh will execute judgment by fire and by His sword on all flesh, and those slain by Yahweh will be many. 17 Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go to the gardens, following one in the center, who eat swine’s flesh, detestable things and mice, will come to an end altogether,” declares Yahweh.

There is also [Joel 2:28-31](#) — 28 It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, [i.e., Jews on the land of Israel during the Millennial Kingdom]; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes.

I suppose Peter could be referring to both #1 and #2 together, that regardless of how long the millennial kingdom lasts, God will bring about a complete judgment of sinful mankind when all is said and done with the present creation.

But I am inclined to think that #2 is correct as Peter wants to impress on his readers the finality of God’s judgment and destruction of unbelievers as portrayed in Revelation 20 and the Great White Throne Judgment and as he will go on to describe in more detail in the rest of chapter 3.

⁵¹ Ἐν δὲ τούτῳ μὴ λανθανέτω ὑμᾶς, ἀγαπητοί, ὅτι μία ἡμέρα ἡμῶν ὡς χίλια ἔτη ἔτι καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία – The verb λανθανέτω is from the same root as that in 3:5, meaning that something remains hidden. Here Peter does not want his Christian readers to keep something hidden from their minds and what they acknowledge about the nature of reality, “that one day for the Lord is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day” (ὅτι μία ἡμέρα ἡμῶν ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία). This is what it means for God to be the transcendent author of all reality. He controls absolutely what time is and how it progresses in cosmic history. Therefore, because time is a creation of God, it is no more something that impinges on His own beingness than a rock or a star or a human being does.

While all this that Peter has been talking about is something that the dismissing unbelievers and false teachers are unwilling to recognize in its totality, he wants to make sure the recipients of this letter are willing to recognize certain important truths about the apparent delay between the revealing of the Messiah at his first coming and his appearance at his second coming, because the unbelievers are not willing to embrace the entirety of the biblical message. He encourages his readers to understand that length of time is neither an impediment to God with respect to His keeping His promises, including that of the Messiah’s return, nor an indication that God does not exist or has forgotten His promises so that the universe just keeps chugging along without any outside or transcendent influence. While unbelievers might choose to let certain aspects of reality escape their notice, Peter knows that people who have been inwardly changed by God will not ignore the fact that He is the transcendent storyteller of the history of the entire creation. Therefore, whenever it suits Him to cause something to happen within the story, He brings it about. If the length of time between it and some other event related to it is one day or a thousand years, this does not affect God’s ability to cause it to occur. Nor does it mean that He is no longer interested in the created reality. All that matters is God’s plan, purpose, and desire to write the event into the story at the particular moment that He chooses. In other words, delays are not delays for God who is an eternal being.

⁵² οὐ βραδύνει ὁ κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τις ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι –

εἰς ἡμᾶς 307. 442. 642. 2492 Byz ἰ δι ὑμας N A Ψ 5. 33. 436. 1611. 1852 latt sy sa ἰ txt p⁷² B C P 048^{vid}. 81. 1175. 1243. 1448. 1735. 1739. 2344

Peter goes on to say that God, the Lord, “is not hesitating in regard to His promise, as some consider hesitation,” (οὐ

ἔβραδύνηι ὁ κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦν). If God is “hesitating,” then it may mean that He has lost interest in fulfilling His promises, or that He has changed His mind or is in the process of changing His mind, or that He simply does not exist and therefore should be ignored. Peter is aware that, even in his day, people may be thinking that they need not be concerned about God’s judgment since nothing of a judgment kind of event has happened recently or is happening.

“Instead,” as Peter says, “He is being patient towards us [you]” (ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς). Indeed, He does not desire that any be destroyed but for all to make the move to repentance” (ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι).

Three options for what Peter means by this –

- 1) That God is being patient “towards you,” i.e., towards his readers whom God desires to persevere and prove that they have authentic faith.
- 2) That God is being patient “towards us,” i.e., all humanity whom He desires to come to authentic faith and be saved.
- 3) That God is being patient “towards us,” i.e., the Jews whom He desires to cease rejecting Jesus, their Messiah, and to come to authentic faith in him.

Since I have changed my mind and am thinking that Peter is writing to a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile Christians, it is making more sense to me that here Peter is commenting on God’s boundless mercy for sinners and has great patience towards mankind and providing them with plenty of time and opportunity to repent of their sin and be saved from His wrath, condemnation, and destruction. Therefore, the “to us” (εἰς ἡμᾶς) of the Majority Text is the correct reading, where “us” refers to sinful humanity, so that #2 is correct.

This would be the same patience that Revelation describes, that in spite of the Jews’ rejection of their Messiah when Jesus first appeared on earth, He continues to give them (and all other human beings) every opportunity to repent and encourages them to do so through the recurring judgments of the first four seals of Revelation 6:1-8 where the Jews are the focus of these judgments, but Gentiles suffer during them also.

Two options, then, for how to interpret this verse –

- 1) The apparent delay in the return of the Messiah is because of God’s having chosen certain human beings to be rescued from his wrath and destruction, and some of these human beings have not yet become believers. Therefore, God is waiting until all whom He has chosen achieve authentic belief and repentance before He destroys the world with fire.
- 2) The apparent delay in the return of the Messiah is because God is a merciful God and reluctant to judge, condemn, and destroy both the Jews and the Gentiles in spite of their rebellion against Him. Therefore, He is truly being patient and waiting to see if those Jews and Gentiles who have not yet believed in Jesus the Messiah will change their minds and believe.

As stated in the previous paragraph, I am inclined to think that option #2 makes more sense in the light of other passages in the Bible that describe God’s willingness to be universally merciful and patient, while it is also true from what Peter is saying that the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles are thinking that God is hesitating to fulfill His promises because, for some reason, He has either lost interest in the promises or is just not the faithful God of whom the Bible speaks.

[Ezekiel 18:23](#) “Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares Adonai Yahweh, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?”

[Ezekiel 18:32](#) “For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,” declares Adonai Yahweh. “Therefore, repent and live.”

[2 Peter 3:15](#) Indeed, regard the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom that was given to him

There are also several passages in Revelation where God provides an interlude and delay in the judgment of the Jews (and that provides the Gentiles with more time to repent) before He finally completes the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord as mentioned succinctly in Malachi 4:5. In the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, Jesus refers likewise to the “great tribulation” of the Jews between his first and second appearances. Nevertheless, He is also being patient towards the Gentiles who, when they believe in Jesus as the Messiah, become grafted in to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises (cf. Romans 11).

Thus, probably, many of Peter’s readers, who are his unbelieving *Jewish* contemporaries, think that God’s delay is His having forgotten His promises and is just being irresponsible—or that He is simply not interested in being the God whom He first said He was—or that God does not exist so that these Jews are abject atheists. We can understand by the Jews’ history how they could come to this conclusion so that just as they think God has forgotten about them (or that He does not even exist), they have chosen to forget about Him!

2 Thessalonians 1:5ff. – “[The Thessalonians’ belief in the midst of persecution and suffering] is proof of God’s morally perfect judgment, so that you may be considered worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are indeed suffering...” Paul expresses a similar perspective that God’s patience is also a time when He takes people of authentic belief through difficult times in order to mature their belief and commitment to the biblical truth, thus making it clear that He will rescue eternally those who persevere in their belief and will destroy eternally those who remain steadfast in their rejection of the biblical message. Thus, it is always good to see God’s delay in judgment as His kind and loving patience towards sinful human beings and as His faithfulness to His chosen believers from both the Jews and the Gentiles to cause them to persevere in their faith and acquire eternal mercy and life.

Peter would naturally include himself in the group of people who are marked for salvation by God and towards whom God is being faithful as He matures their belief and demonstrates its authenticity. Thus, the “to us” is what he wrote. So this is all in spite of how harshly he has written about the false teachers in particular and any others who ignore God.
⁵³ Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς. ἐν ἧ ὅι οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα τ [ουχ] εὐρεθήσεται –
εὐρεθησεται N B P 1175. 1448. 1739^{txt}. 1852^{sy} . 1852^{ph mss txt} . 1852^{sy} . 1852^{hmg} ; εὐρεθησεται λυομενα p⁷² ; αφανισθησονται C ; κατακαησεται A 048. 33. 81. 307. 436. 442. 642. 1611. 1739^{vid} . 2344 Byz vg^{cl} sy^{ph mss v.l.} sy^h ; Cyr ; κατακαησονται 5. 1243. 1735. 2492 ; txt sy^{ph mss} sa cv^{vid}

The key phrase here is obviously “The Day of the Lord” (ἡμέρα κυρίου). Notice the following 16 passages where it is used in the OT –

Isaiah 13:6 Wail, for the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. [It refers to the destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians which took place around 600 B.C.]

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is coming, cruel, with fury and burning anger, to make the land a desolation; and He will exterminate its sinners from it. [Isaiah 13:9-16 is a separate prophecy regarding the end of either the age of rebellious Jews or of all rebellious mankind. Then Isaiah 13:17-22 returns to the ANE and God’s destruction of Babylon for its arrogant role in executing God’s judgment on the Jews around 600 B.C.]

Isaiah 58:13 If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD [Yahweh] honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, [God through Isaiah exhorts the Jews to honor the Sabbath commandment by granting rest from their laborers, thus making it a true day of the Lord in the sense that they recognize the divine origin of the commandment and the designation of the day.]

Ezekiel 13:5 You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the LORD [Yahweh]. [God indicts the false prophets of Judah in exile for not having repaired the “breaks” in the Jews’ disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant. Nor did they guard and protect the temple from false worship so that it would have stood when the “Day of the Lord” came about, i.e., when Nebuchadnezzar brought destruction on Jerusalem and the temple between 605 and 586 B.C.]

Ezekiel 30:1 The word of Yahweh came again to me saying, 2 “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Adonai Yahweh, “Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’ 3 “For the day is near, even the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. 4 “A sword will come upon Egypt, and anguish will be in Ethiopia; when the slain fall in Egypt, they take away her wealth, and her foundations are torn down. 5 “Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league will fall with them by the sword.” [Because this prediction speaks of the judgment and destruction of multiple nations, it most likely refers to the return of Jesus who judges all nations in the surrounding area of the Middle East by destroying all unbelieving Jews and the unbelieving Gentiles who have attacked the Jews on the land of Israel.]

Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty. [The entire book of Joel is about the final time of God’s judgment on the Jews and His fulfilling His promise to make them a great nation. Therefore, this is a reference to the return of Jesus.]

Joel 2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is coming; surely it is near, 2 a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations. 3 A fire consumes before them and behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them but a desolate wilderness behind them, and nothing at all escapes them. 4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like war horses, so they run. 5 With a noise as of chariots they leap on the tops of the mountains, like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, like a mighty people arranged for battle. 6 Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale. 7 They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like soldiers; and they each march in line, nor do they deviate from their paths. 8 They do not crowd each other, they march everyone in his path; when they burst through the defenses, they do not break ranks. 9 They rush on the city, they run on the wall; they climb into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. 10 Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness. 11 Yahweh utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD [Yahweh] is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it? [Like the previous quote from Joel, this is all about Jesus’ return and the final judgment of the Jews on the land of Israel, as well as the judgment and destruction of the army that has invaded Israel to destroy the Jews. But Jesus destroys them at the Battle of Armageddon.]

Joel 2:28 “It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh, [i.e., Jews during the Millennial Kingdom]; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. 31 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the LORD [Yahweh] comes. [Here again is a reference to the final judgment of Israel and God’s changing the hearts of the 144,000 Jews whom He protected from the destruction of the Beast of Revelation and his invading army that had gathered at Armageddon. This passage is quoted by Peter in his first sermon in Acts 2:17-21.]

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is near in the valley of decision. [I include only this one verse, but the whole context is important to point out that Joel is referring to the judgment of the nations at the same time as the judgment of the Jews on the land of Israel. The main place of this judgment will be the Battle of Armageddon on the land of Israel with its repercussions in the Middle East because it will be these nations who attack Israel in league with the Beast of Revelation.]

Amos 5:18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD [Yahweh], for what purpose will the day of the LORD [Yahweh] be to you? It will be darkness and not light; **19** As when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him. **20** Will not the day of the LORD [Yahweh] be darkness instead of light, even gloom with no brightness in it? [This, too, must be the time when God rescues Israel from their enemies forever and yet judges them and destroys all unbelieving Jews before He does so. Therefore, this refers to the return of Jesus.]

Obadiah 15 “For the day of the LORD [Yahweh] draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.” [While Obadiah addresses mainly the descendants of Esau who have chosen to take a stand against God’s people, the Jews, this verse refers to His judgment of all the nations who have adopted the same stand. And this judgment will occur most emphatically when Jesus returns.]

Zephaniah 1:7 Be silent before the Adonai Yahweh! For the day of the LORD [Yahweh] is near, for Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated His guests. [This specific reference may be to the destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians between 600-586 B.C.]

Zephaniah 1:14 Near is the great day of the LORD [Yahweh], near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the LORD [Yahweh]! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. [This reference to the Day of the Lord with the verses that follow sounds like the final judgment of the Jews at Jesus’ return.]

Malachi 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD [Yahweh]. **6** He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” [The restoring of the hearts of the current Jews to the condition of the hearts of the fathers of the Jews, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must be referring to the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Therefore, this day of the Lord is the final judgment of the Jews by God at the time of Jesus’ return.]

There is also Paul’s mention of the Day of the Lord as it will appear like a thief, referring to Jesus’ return in **1 Thessalonians 5:2-3** — **2** For you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. **3** While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

Thus, the question here is,

- 1) Does Peter lump together the return of Jesus and the final judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom, or
- 2) Does he refer to only the return of Jesus or
- 3) Does he refer to only the final judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom?

With all the possible variants of Greek words for this verse, it makes the most sense that Peter is talking about the final judgment of Revelation 20 when God destroys this realm and creates a new one with a new earth on which believers will live with Jesus into eternity. The whole, present creation is going to disappear when God destroys it with fire at the Day of the Lord—the final judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. We also know from other passages that this will be after Jesus has set up his earthly kingdom in Jerusalem for a period of time called the millennium, when he will rule over the Jews on the land of Israel and over the Gentiles in the rest of the world. Therefore, I have concluded that Peter’s emphasis is to point to the final destruction of unbelievers at the end of the present realm in order to help the Christians to whom he is writing grab on to the promise from God of their eternal salvation as described in 3:11ff.

As a result, the “Day of the Lord” in 3:10 is the end of the present realm, after the millennial kingdom. And it “will come like a thief,” meaning that God will give no major warning of its happening—except for Satan’s deceiving the Gentile nations and convincing them to attack Jesus and the nation of Israel. Thus, the thief-like occurrence will be with respect to the unbelieving Gentiles in the rest of the world. And “the heavens will pass away,” etc. when God destroys “the elements” of this creation by burning them up with fire. Thus, “the earth and the works in it will not be found” anymore, because this realm will disappear in order for God to bring about the next, eternal realm where transformed believers will live for all eternity. And Peter probably has in mind more the sinful “works” of sinful and evil people who have inhabited the present earth, including the sinful “works” of authentic believers, that it will be all these that will be left behind when God destroys this realm and creates a new one where only morally perfect actions and behavior by human beings will exist.

Thus, Peter is more than hinting that God’s judgment is coming on unbelievers, so that repentance is necessary to avoid it, and he is encouraging his readers (and anyone they may come into contact with) to be people of genuine repentance, belief, and obedience.

⁵⁴ Τοῦτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων ποταποὺς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν ἡμᾶς ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις —

ἡμᾶς ὑπαρχειν 642 ἰ ὑπαρχειν ἡμας N* 5 ἰ ὑπαρχειν ^{72, 74vid} B 1175 ^{ms} ἰ παρχειν εαυτους 1243

As above, there is the strong possibility that Peter is referring to “us” and not just “you,” thereby including himself and the apostles in the thought that all people, including all Jewish people, need to behave in a particular way if they desire to be saved from God’s destructive actions at the final judgment at the end of the present realm. To read “us” (ἡμᾶς)

makes more sense in the light of his speaking about “us” in 3:9.

In the light of God’s judgment, which does come in two stages but which Peter describes in its ultimate terms, he exhorts his readers to take on the personal, human responsibility of preparing themselves, both their “ways of life” (ἀναστροφῆς) and their “actions” that are “indicative of proper worship of God” (εὐσεβείας), for divine judgment. In other words, the task of a human being is to prepare himself for the judgment by pursuing living a full biblical life as much as possible by the grace of God. This will involve “ways of life” (pl.) and “actions of proper worship of God” (pl.) that are “set apart” (ἀγίας), different from those of the rest of people in the world who lack changed hearts and authentic belief and obedience of God.

⁵⁵ προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμέρας δι’ ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα ἴηκεται – In the light of *ημᾶς* making more sense in the previous verse, translating the nominative plural accusative participles with “we” instead of “you” is better. As a result, Peter is saying that both the apostles and their believing listeners are both waiting for (προσδοκῶντας) and hastening (σπεύδοντας) the event called the Day of the Lord and the Day of God, which will spell the end of the present realm when God uses fire to destroy it. Even though human history must pass through the Millennial Kingdom before the final destruction of the present realm occurs, Peter wants his readers to have mostly in mind this final destruction as he exhorts them to live their lives in line with the gospel which will save them from God’s wrath. Therefore, no one can “hasten” the final judgment by making it occur sooner. Peter is talking about a subjective “hastening” whereby believers look forward to eternal life with great anticipation and eagerness. Really, it cannot come fast enough for them. But they are greatly looking forward to it. So Peter asks the question as to what kind of people believers should be in the middle of demonstrating their proper worship of God in their lives.

Luke 2:16 So they came in a hurry (καὶ ἦλθαν σπεύσαντες) and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

We could consider also **Zephaniah 3:8** “Therefore wait for Me,” declares Yahweh, “For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal. **9** For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of Yahweh, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder. **10** From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, will bring My offerings. **11** In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain. **12** But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh. **13** The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble.”

The above passage in Zephaniah may seem to refer to the final judgment and not Jesus’ return to destroy Israel’s enemies, but God may be speaking of how He will begin His large-scale judgment when He restores the Kingdom of Israel and then finish it after He has accomplished this restoration over a long period of time, i.e., the “1,000 years” of Revelation 20. Another option is that Zephaniah is talking about the judgment of Gentiles when Jesus returns with the subsequent conversion of all the Jews and their being restored to the land of Israel for the millennial kingdom. Thus, the “fire” of God’s “zeal” that “devours” people is a definite destruction of all nations, including the nation of Israel, during the Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh immediately before Jesus returns.

⁵⁶ καινός δὲ οὐρανός καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ – Assuming that Peter in this passage is referring to all the judgment that God will bring about on the world and the Jews and to the complete destruction of this realm in the end (as described in Revelation 20 & 21), here he speaks of a whole new reality which God will create. It will be characterized not by immorality, moral rebellion, and death as this one has been, but by moral perfection (δικαιοσύνη) and life—eternal life. It is this future realm for which Peter and all other fellow believers are waiting confidently and expectantly, implying that they are not counting on the present realm to bring total fulfillment, satisfaction, and pleasure.

In addition, the new morally perfect reality is part of God’s promise, just as much as the return of the Messiah is. God made this initial promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. He called it His “blessing” which He would give Abraham as that for which he qualified by being a man of genuine belief and obedience even as a sinner. God was also promising this “blessing” to all individuals of all other ethnic groups who adopted the same kind of belief that he had.

Nevertheless, there is this passage in **Is. 65:17** “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth (וְאֶרֶץ נְיָוָה וְשָׁמַיִם נְיָוָה) (ἔσται γὰρ ὁ οὐρανὸς καινός καὶ ἡ γῆ καινή), and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.” However, in Isaiah 65, God is referring to the Millennial Kingdom and not to a completely new creation, because he goes on to say in **Isaiah 65:18-23**, **18** “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness. **19** I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people; and there will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping and the sound of crying. **20** No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed. **21** They will build houses and inhabit them; they will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. **22** They will not build and another inhabit, they will not plant and another eat; for as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands. **23** They will not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they are the offspring of those blessed by Yahweh, and their descendants with them.”

The rest of this passage in Isaiah 65 shows that God is speaking of people who die and who bear children, which will not happen in the realm of the new heaven and new earth of Revelation 21. Therefore, God is speaking in Isaiah of a new order of universe when Satan is bound and Jesus rules the entire world with a “rod of iron” (cf. Psalm 2; Revelation 19:15).

⁵⁷ Διό, ἀγαπητοί, ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἄμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ – Now, Peter answers the question that he asked in vs. 11 & 12. The apostles and fellow believers should be people of the future, expecting “these things” (ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες), eternal shalom of the eternal Kingdom of God, which means that they should pursue moral goodness with authentic belief. This is what Peter means by “spotless and without blemish” (ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἄμώμητοι), where the second word is an OT term that refers to the “perfection” of the animal being sacrificed by a Jew and to the Jew who has biblical inwardness as demonstrated by his willingness to adhere to the ceremonial and sacrificial commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

Peter wants them to be “diligent” (σπουδάσατε) “to be found by God in a state of shalom” (αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ), which means a condition whereby they will attain God’s promise of eternal shalom in the Kingdom of God by having met the essential condition of a changed heart, authentic belief, and diligent existential, Christian wholeness as Peter described in 1:5-7.

Examples of “blemish” are in the following passages —

Exodus 29:1 “Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to Me—take one young bull and two rams without blemish (בְּלֹמֶסֶת) (ἄμώμους)... [The animals are not “perfect” in the sense that there is absolutely nothing about them that could be considered a flaw, but they certainly appear good and healthy, thus reflecting the Jew’s willingness to present to God the best of what is available.]

Psalm 19:13 Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins (בְּחַטֹּאתַי) (ἀπὸ ἀλλοτριῶν). Let them not rule over me. Then I will be blameless (בְּיָמֵי) (ἄμωμος), and I shall be acquitted of great transgression. [David in Psalm 19 cannot be saying that he is morally perfect. Indeed, in this one verse he admits that he is guilty of great immorality. Therefore, his blamelessness is his willingness to be humble and repentant before God in order to gain His mercy and life in the fulfillment of God’s promises.]

As a result, this exhortation by Peter is like Paul’s in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, “Do not cause the Spirit to stop functioning.” Even in the light of God’s being the transcendent storyteller who is bringing about human history exactly as He has planned it, Peter (and Paul) would have his (their) readers make every human effort to choose to do that which is right according to the apostolic message. This is what kind of people they should be as they wait for the Day of the Lord which will contain certainly Jesus’ return (even though Peter does not explicitly mention it) and the eventual destruction of the present realm, which he explicitly mentions.

⁵⁸ καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγείσθε, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθείσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν – There is one word that defines and describes the “delay” of God and the “patience of God” (μακροθυμίαν) in bringing about the end of the world—“salvation” (σωτηρίαν)! Everything that has been occurring since Peter’s day and will occur until the present realm ends when God destroys it with fire is for the purpose of His rescuing those whom He has chosen and designated for eternal “salvation.” This includes not only changing people inwardly, so that they spiritually transition from being abject rebels against God to committed believers in the Messiah, but also keeping them changed inwardly and committed to receiving the promise of eternal salvation by living full ways of life in line with the entire biblical message.

Peter refers to a letter that the apostle Paul wrote “according to the wisdom given to him” (κατὰ τὴν δοθείσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν) to these same people and in which he focused on the subject of salvation—as we would expect him to do (cf. Romans-Titus, and Hebrews also). If the recipients of Peter’s letter are Jews, then it certainly makes sense that Paul’s letter to them was the one we call Hebrews. But this would be only if we actually have the letter of Paul to which Peter is referring.

⁵⁹ ὡς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἑπιστολαῖς λαλῶν ἐν αὐταῖς περὶ τούτων, ἐν αἷς ἐστὶν δυσνόητά τινα, ἃ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι στρεβλοῦσιν ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν – According to Peter, the apostle Paul has written “concerning these things” (περὶ τούτων) of God’s judgment and destruction and being saved from these according to a sinner’s belief and obedience.

But there are “some things hard to understand” (δυσνόητά τινα), which obviously include theological elements regarding morality, sin, judgment, and the dynamic that exists between God and His creation. Peter says that, for whatever reason, the false teachers have not “learned,” i.e., they are “unlearned” (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς) while they actually may have been well-taught. They may have even taught themselves by studying the scriptures themselves, but they have not been willing learn the Bible, because they do not like what it has to say. They ignore parts of the Bible and therefore are “unlearned” in these parts by choice. And this because these false teachers are “unestablished” (ἀστήρικτοι) too, to which Peter has already alluded by claiming that these false teachers seek people who are “unestablished” to entice — **2:14** They have eyes full of adultery and are constantly restless for sin, enticing unestablished persons (ψυχὰς ἀστήρικτους), having a heart that has been trained in no respect for proper boundaries (πλεονεξίας).

This is to say that these false teachers have not become fully established in their hearts and minds as authentic Christians with genuine belief and obedience of God.

Only those who are willing learn the entire biblical message and become inwardly established in their hearts and belief will be saved from God’s destruction. But these people, to whom Peter is referring, distort (στρεβλοῦσιν) both what

Paul has written and “the rest of the scriptures” (ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς) and the eternal effect for them will be “destruction” (ἀπόλειαν).

Peter thus refers to people who are distorting the “rest of the writings” (τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς), i.e., the OT. This could just as easily be Gentiles, who explicitly reject the Bible as God’s revelation to humanity, or it could be Jews, who misunderstand especially the Mosaic Covenant and thus miss the importance of Jesus as the suffering Messiah. The consequence of rejecting and/or distorting/misunderstanding the Bible intentionally (for personal gain of money, power, popularity, fitting in with the culture) is eternal destruction. This is what Peter has been writing so forcibly about avoiding for his readers. Peter is also saying that these same misguided people have read Paul’s letters, but they willingly distort them, too. As I said above, this occurs because these people are “unlearned” (οἱ ἀμαθεῖς) and “unstable” (ἀστήρικτοι). The first word seems to refer to their unwillingness to do all the work that is necessary to grasp the biblical message. So while they read and interpret the Bible and Paul’s letters, they fail to understand correctly what these documents are really saying. We get our words asteroid and steroids from the second word, which refers to these people’s unwillingness to remain committed to truth. They are not strong in their commitment to the truth. Something else gets in the way of their staying grounded in their desire to learn about God, and they basically end up making things up about Him based upon their poor understanding of the biblical documents.

If Peter is saying in that culture and as a contemporary of Paul that his letters are hard to understand, especially Hebrews, then where does this leave us in the 21st century in a completely different culture and speaking a completely different language? Obviously, it puts us in a very precarious position, requiring that we be just that much more careful and humble in our study of the Bible as well as gracious and loving towards other Christians who disagree with our interpretations of passages.

⁶⁰ Ὑμεῖς οὖν, ἀγαπητοί, προγινώσκοντες φυλάσσεσθε, ἵνα μὴ τῇ τῶν ἀθέσμων πλάνῃ συναπαχθέντες ἐκπέσητε τοῦ ἰδίου στηριγμοῦ – The world will always contain people who reject truth and embrace error and who strongly recommend that everyone else do the same. Peter is exhorting his readers not to fall under the spell of such rebels against God, e.g., the false teachers of chapters 2 & 3, knowing ahead of time that their presence and intent will come along and contaminate Christian communities by borrowing ideas from surrounding cultures and societies in a demonstrative way. In order to avoid being influenced by such people, it will require an “establishment of commitment” (στηριγμοῦ) on the part of the recipients of this letter. Notice that στηριγμοῦ is from the same root as “unestablished” (ἀστήρικτοι) in the previous verse. There are those who are the latter, uncommitted to truth, and there are those who are committed to the truth. Peter is encouraging his readers to remain committed and established in their belief, obedience, and living full, existential Christian lives.

The way that Peter is expressing these ideas, he must mean that retaining an “establishment of commitment” will not be easy. The strong influence of a Christian’s own sin and the attractiveness of clever but erroneous unbelievers’ ideas and propaganda (“the error of unprincipled men” – τῇ τῶν ἀθέσμων πλάνῃ) will result in an authentic, human struggle within Christians to stay the course in their undivided belief in the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah. These unbelievers lack commitment to the instruction of God through the Bible. Thus, they are “lawless.”

As with “unestablished” in the previous verse, we get our word steroids from this term στηριγμοῦ. An inwardness on steroids is the willful choice on people’s part to remain fully committed not only to truth, but also to obtaining God’s eternal mercy through the advocacy of Jesus as high priest and Messiah. And, of course, only God’s grace can cause this to be the case for any sinful human being.

⁶¹ αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνῶσει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὅτι αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. ^ο[ἀμήν.] – It is the concept of God’s grace and His instructions regarding biblical morality that gets distorted by “unprincipled men” (τῶν ἀθέσμων), and the way to avoid such distortion is to continue learning the entirety of the biblical message that centers on the existence and the purpose for the Messiah. Staying close to this truth by diligently, carefully, and consistently studying the apostolic documents along with those to which they refer, the OT, so that a person grows in their grasp of as much biblical truth as possible, will allow him to avoid the disaster of God’s wrath, judgment, condemnation, and resultant eternal destruction.

It is Jesus who is experiencing great glory now as the crucified, risen from the dead, and ascended Messiah and who will experience even more glory (ἡ δόξα) beginning with his return and establishing the eternal Kingdom of God and continuing “into the day of the age,” i.e., into eternity and the eternal Kingdom of God.