

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

2 PET. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a

preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)

9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

10a But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.

NOTES

The Destruction of False Teachers

Lesson Text: 2 Peter 2:1-10a

Related Scriptures: Jude 1:3-7; Luke 17:22-37;
Genesis 6:1-8; 19:1-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

TIME: between A.D. 63-64

PLACE: unknown

GOLDEN TEXT—"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9).

Lesson Exposition

INTRODUCING THE FALSE PROPHETS—2 Pet. 2:1-3a

Second Peter 2:1-3 contrasts false teachers and true prophets and apostles. In 1:16-21, Peter affirmed that the apostles did not use cunningly devised fables in making known the power and coming of Jesus Christ. The biblical writers were eyewitnesses of His majesty. The reference to witnessing Christ's majesty was an allusion to the encounter with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration when they heard the Father's voice from the cloud (Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7). Peter understood that just as Old Testament prophecy was given through the Holy Spirit as objective truth, so it was with the apostles' message. They reported what had been confirmed by their experience of Jesus.

Some false prophets were influencing the churches. They denied that Jesus would return to judge the world (2 Pet. 3:3-4). In addition, they practiced and encouraged an immoral lifestyle (2:2). Whereas the apostles grounded their teachings in the Scriptures and affirmed Jesus' identity as the Son of God,

the false prophets denied Jesus—even though they were bought by Him (vs. 1)! Such strong language probably implies that they repudiated not just the Second Coming but also the identity of Jesus. We can see why Peter condemned them. A denial of Christ results in a denial of the Second Coming, the hope of believers (Titus 2:13).

Second Peter 2:3 is the first of several times that Peter spoke of the greed of these false prophets. They were greedily exploiting people in the church and leading them into immoral behavior.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE ANGELS—2 Pet. 2:3b-4

The second half of verse 3 introduces three examples of God's judgment of the disobedient from the Old Testament. Peter's argument was, "Just as they received judgment back then, so these false prophets will receive judgment."

Arguing that nothing had changed, Peter's goal was to refute the claim of the false prophets that Christ would not come in judgment (vs. 4). Peter showed that God's judgment had come to the

unrighteous from the beginning as far back as Genesis, the book of beginnings.

There are also clear parallels between 2 Peter 2:4-9 and Jude 1:6-7. Both texts deal with those who deny Christ as their Master and Lord, though Jude has a more detailed description (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4). The differences between the passages highlight Peter's and Jude's distinct purposes. Jude concentrated on examples of punishments of the wicked, while Peter supplemented those with examples of God's deliverance of the righteous, reminding his readers of God's promise to those who remain faithful.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT FLOOD—2 Pet. 2:5

Peter's second example of God's judgment is an allusion to the Flood of Genesis. Peter compared it with the final judgment at the coming of Christ. It is not, however, only judgment that is in view. God's salvation of Noah through the Flood is also in view. The allusion to the rescue of Noah reminds us that the righteous will be rescued by God and escape the coming judgment.

THE JUDGMENT OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH—2 Pet. 2:6-8

Peter's final example of judgment and rescue is Sodom and Gomorrah. The false teachers of 2 Peter mirrored Sodom and Gomorrah in their licentious ways and their desire to exploit the church (2:2-3). Peter referred to Lot as an example of the righteous. Although Genesis 19:30-38 shows moral failure by Lot and his daughters, Lot's departure from Sodom showed his righteousness, even if it was derived from his relationship with Abraham. Like Lot, Christians should grieve over the sin of the world while remaining uncompromising in their faith.

Peter's language is particularly strong in conveying how Christians ought to be vexed by the manner of living that the wicked model (2 Pet. 2:7). They should be sorely vexed by evil.

GOD'S RESCUE OF THE RIGHTEOUS FROM THE JUDGMENT—2 Pet. 2:9-10

Peter introduced his ongoing arguments with four "if God" statements: (1) "spared not the angels"; (2) "spared not the old world"; (3) "[turned] Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes"; and (4) "delivered . . . Lot" (vss. 4, 5, 6, 7). If God has been faithful to the righteous in the past, surely He will preserve the godly today.

—Bob Anderson

QUESTIONS

1. To what event did Peter allude when he mentioned the apostles' eyewitness account of Christ's majesty in 2 Peter 1:16?
2. In what ways were the Old Testament prophecies comparable to the apostolic message?
3. What two fundamental doctrines did the false teachers of 2 Peter deny?
4. What seems to have been the false teachers' motive?
5. What was Peter's point in citing three Old Testament examples of divine judgment?
6. What respective ideas did Jude 1:6-7 and 2 Peter 2:4-9 emphasize that account for the differences in the two parallel passages?
7. In addition to a judgment warning, what message does Peter deliver to us by discussing Noah?
8. How does the account of Lot in Genesis 19:30-38 contrast with Peter's depiction of Lot in 2 Peter 2:7-8?
9. What message does Lot's life convey to us who live in a very immoral world?
10. What was Peter's logical argument when he posed the four "if God" statements?

—Bob Anderson

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Today's false teachers follow the same patterns as false teachers of the past (2 Pet. 2:1).
2. False teachers can be identified by their immoral conduct (vss. 2-3).
3. Those who claim that the Old Testament God is wrathful while the New Testament God is loving overlook the fact that the New Testament cites Old Testament judgments to prove the reality of a greater judgment to come (vss. 4-9).
4. The more darkness surrounds us, the brighter a righteous life can shine in the world (vs. 5).
5. If we are not distressed by immoral conduct in our culture, it may mean we have become callous to unrighteousness (vss. 6-8).
6. God's judgment is a great comfort to the righteous (vss. 9-10a).

—Matthew Robinson

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. What are some ways the Bible tells us we can identify false teachers?
2. Compare 2 Peter 2:2 with the similar language of Isaiah 52:5. How does the context of Isaiah 52:5 help us understand Peter's point?
3. How could Peter call Lot a "righteous man" (2 Pet. 2:8) when Lot made many choices by sight rather than by faith (cf. Gen. 13:10-11), willingly entrenched himself in an unrighteous society (13:12-13; 19:1), and did not leave that city until the angels physically removed him (19:15-16)?
4. How can judgment be a comforting thing (2 Pet. 2:9; cf. Rev. 6:9-10)?

—Matthew Robinson

Golden Text Illuminated

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Peter 2:9).

In a world where deception runs rampant and false teachings abound, Peter's words offer both warning and comfort. Peter reminds us of the wisdom and justice of God in dealing with the righteous and the unrighteous. Peter's warning is not an idle one. False teachers, driven by greed and a desire for power, seek to lead believers astray with their deceptive words and sensual allurements (vss. 2-3).

God is not oblivious to the schemes of the wicked. He demonstrated His power to deliver the righteous and judge the unrighteous repeatedly. Peter pointed to the examples of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5; Gen. 6:1-8) and Lot (2 Pet. 2:6-8; Gen. 19:1-26).

God can discern between the righteous and the wicked, providing a way of escape in difficulty (1 Cor. 10:13). God will not allow the wicked to go unpunished. This should motivate believers to persevere. In a world increasingly hostile to the gospel, God's promise provides a firm foundation for our faith. We can rest assured that He will deliver us and bring us safely into His eternal kingdom.

May Peter's words remind us of God's faithfulness and justice in the face of deception and temptation. Let us hold fast to the hope that is ours in Christ, knowing the Lord will never abandon His own but will deliver the godly and reserve the unjust for judgment. In this assurance, we can stand firm, boldly proclaiming the truth as lights in a dark world.

—Gene Kissinger