



BOOKS OF THE BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

by WAYNE PALMER

2 P E T E R



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INTRODUCTION

“The apostles are deceiving you—Jesus Christ is not coming back to judge the world.” That was the claim that Christian teachers were spreading throughout congregations in the province of Asia Minor in the mid first century. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to write his second letter to set the record straight.

The Book of 2 Peter assures believers that Jesus will definitely return to destroy the heavens and the earth and replace them with the new heavens and the new earth. He will judge the living and the dead, giving eternal life and salvation to those He has preserved in faith through His Word and Sacraments and condemning all those who disobey to eternal fire and destruction—including the false Christian teachers who were leading many Christians astray, especially new Christians.

AUTHORSHIP

The Book of 2 Peter was written by the apostle Simon Peter. He wrote it shortly before he was crucified in Rome.

PURPOSE

Second Peter warns Christians to beware of false teachers who were promoting sinful lifestyles and denying that Jesus would return in judgment. It focuses on the Lord’s patience, why we are still waiting for Judgment Day, the certainty of God’s fiery punishment for unbelievers, and the eternal blessings He will give all who trust in Him.

OUTLINE

For the purposes of this study, we will divide 2 Peter into the following sections:

- 1.** The Apostolic Salutation
- 2.** Exhortation to Godliness
- 3.** Warning against False Teachers
- 4.** Answers to Skepticism regarding the End of This World
- 5.** Final Exhortation on the Basis of Christian Expectation and Hope

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

THE APOSTOLIC SALUTATION

Peter greets his readers, assuring them that their faith gives them equal standing before God with him and the other apostles.

Read 1:1–2.

Q 1: Who is Simeon?

A 1: *Simeon* is the Hebrew form of the more common Greek name *Simon*. It is used in reference to Peter only here and in Acts 15:14. His parents named him Simeon (Simon), and Jesus named him Peter. It is this famous apostle who wrote 2 Peter.

Q 2: Why does Peter call himself Christ's servant?

A 2: The Greek word can also be translated as “slave.” Peter belongs to Jesus; he was purchased at the price of his Savior’s blood. But interestingly, in the New Testament, this title is used only for leaders and teachers of the Early Church. Jesus was the great Servant of Isaiah’s prophecy (see Isaiah 52:13), but Peter here is pointing out the authority Christ gave him to be a servant of the Church.

Q 3: What does the title *apostle* signify?

A 3: Peter is a witness of the risen Christ, sent out by Jesus to make disciples of all nations. Jesus Christ authorized Peter to teach the Church. The false teachers he will attack in this letter received no such authorization or authority.

Q 4: Why does Peter remind his readers they have received a faith that is of equal standing with the apostles?

A 4: After establishing his authority to teach God’s truth, Peter assures his readers that in God’s eyes, their faith has equal standing with his and that of the other apostles. We are all equally sons and daughters of God by faith in Jesus Christ. All faith is created and sustained by the Holy Spirit working through the Word and Sacraments.

Q 5: What is Peter confessing about Jesus when he calls Him both God and Lord?

A 5: Peter is confessing that Jesus is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Q 6: What is significant about the phrase “grace and peace” in verse 2?

A 6: The word *grace* is a common Greek greeting, while *peace* is a common Hebrew greeting. Using both together, Peter shows that the Gospel is for both Jews and Gentiles. Add to this the equal standing that Peter assures, and we see that in God's eyes, there is no difference between Jewish and Greek believers.

Q 7: Why does Peter add “knowledge” in verse 2?

A 7: Using the words *grace* and *peace* was common in the greetings of other New Testament letters, but the word *knowledge* was not commonly used. Peter adds it here to foreshadow the main theme of his letter: reinforcing the saving knowledge of God while exposing the lies of the false prophets.

EXHORTATION TO GODLINESS

Peter encourages his readers to live godly lives.

CONTENT OF THIS EXHORTATION

After describing how Christ has given us everything necessary to live a godly life, Peter calls us to do just that.

Read 1:3–11.

Q 8: What does Peter mean by the “things that pertain to life and godliness”?

A 8: Peter means that we do not need to cultivate qualities to be able to serve God, nor reach deep down inside to find the desire and strength to live as Christians. God has given us faith and all the fruit of love and service we need to be able to live a godly life, these being kindness, patience, mercy, self-control, and so on (Galatians 5:22–23).

Q 9: What does it mean for us to become partakers of the divine nature?

A 9: Peter does not mean that our human nature will be transformed or become part of the Godhead. He means we are given a new relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. We partake of the divine nature whenever we receive the true body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion and because the Holy Spirit dwells inside us.

Q 10: Why does Peter speak of the corruption that is in the world?

A 10: Peter mentions this because false teachers were encouraging Christians to indulge their sinful desires, which false teachers consider natural. Peter reminds his readers that these desires have corrupted the world; they are not God's design for humanity.

Q 11: What is the purpose for the list of qualities Peter gives in verses 5–7?

A 11: These describe the Christian life, which flows from the gifts God gives us in Christ. They present a life that is the direct opposite of the life behaviors espoused by false teachers.

Q 12: Why does Peter’s list begin with faith?

A 12: All the good works of a Christian flow from faith in Jesus Christ and are impossible without faith.

Q 13: What does it mean to supplement our faith with virtue?

A 13: “To supplement” means to add something to make the original more complete. Virtue is behavior that shows high moral standards. Our faith is invisible to others—but we can demonstrate that faith through our good, virtuous behavior. False teachers would have Christians follow very low moral standards.

Q 14: How can we supplement virtue with knowledge?

A 14: Peter is speaking of the scriptural knowledge of our relationship with God and how He would have us live in His world. False teachers do not have this knowledge—or they choose to ignore it.

Q 15: What does self-control add to knowledge?

A 15: Self-control is the ability to restrain ourselves from acting on the temptations and sinful desires that we all have. Peter’s enemies teach that people should let those temptations and desires control their lives.

Q 16: What is steadfastness? Why is it important for our lives as Christians?

A 16: Steadfastness is the strength to persevere or keep going when it is difficult to do so. It is the power God provides to keep us from giving up and surrendering to opposition, persecution, and temptation. Of course, when people follow false teachers, they never build up steadfastness because they are always surrendering to their sinful desires.

Q 17: What is godliness?

A 17: Godliness is being like God—living a life that pleases God. It involves reverence, respect, and devotion toward God and our neighbors. It means that we do everything to bring glory to God, never ourselves. Again, false teachers urge a lifestyle that is completely opposite of God.

Q 18: What is brotherly affection?

A 18: Brotherly affection includes our kindness, love, concern, and delight in one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. It means putting

others first. Peter's rivals encourage the exact opposite: putting self and selfish desires first.

Q 19: What kind of love is Peter speaking about in verse 7?

A 19: Peter is speaking of selfless love, or the commitment to love and care for others and to put God and His will first in all things.

Q 20: How does living out these qualities in our lives keep us from being ineffective or unfruitful with the knowledge God has given us in His Word?

A 20: When we exercise our faith with good works, the Holy Spirit makes our faith stronger and our connection with God in heart, mind, and soul ever firmer.

Q 21: How can our good works make our calling and election more sure?

A 21: It is impossible for our works to influence God's call or make Him more loving toward us—the faith created in us by the Holy Spirit alone does that. But when we exercise our faith by practicing these skills, the risk of becoming spiritually blind and falling into unbelief diminishes.

Q 22: Is Peter teaching that we will never fall into sin if we diligently do good works?

A 22: No. Our sinful nature makes it impossible for us to stop sinning. But when we do sin, the Spirit will lead us to repent and turn away from confidence in our works to faith in Christ and His salvation. Jesus will faithfully forgive us, guard us from falling away from saving faith, and empower us for more faithful living.

Q 23: Why does Peter close this section by mentioning our entrance into God's eternal kingdom?

A 23: Peter wants to set the goal of our faith and godly living before our eyes so we realize that, if we turn from this life of faith to follow false teachings, we will forfeit our place in God's kingdom.

NECESSITY OF THIS REMINDER

Peter explains his purpose in writing this letter.

Read 1:12–15.

Q 24: How does Peter intend “always to remind” us of the qualities of godly living?

A 24: The Book of 2 Peter was written for this purpose. Even after two thousand years, we can read Peter's words of counsel again and again.

Q 25: Why do we need to be reminded of these virtues if we already know them?

A 25: Our sinful natures tempt us to live for ourselves rather than for God and others—we easily forget virtue and lose our way.

Q 26: What does Peter mean by the words “as long as I am in this body” (v. 13)?

A 26: Peter may have been imprisoned in Rome while writing this letter, in which case, he knew the time of his death was close. If this was not the case, and he was still free, he knew from Jesus’ prophecy (John 21:18–19) that he would die by crucifixion and not live until Christ’s return. So here, before the day of his death came, Peter wrote these words to stir us up to holy living.

For the word translated “body,” Peter uses the Greek word for “tent.” This reminds us how temporary and fragile this earthly body is—especially in comparison to our eternal, glorified, resurrected body. We would do well to remember how short our own earthly lives are (and those of the people around us) so that we do not delay passing on the faith with our encouragement to others.

Q 27: Why did Peter feel his readers needed to be stirred up?

A 27: Peter’s readers were not aware of the great danger hidden in the false teachings he will address in chapter 2.

Q 28: What did Peter mean that he would make every effort to make his reminder accessible to his readers at any time after he was killed?

A 28: Peter meant that he would work to make sure that his letter was preserved and included in the Holy Scriptures, since it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, when speaking of his departure, Peter used the word *exodus*—translated in ESV as “departure,” meaning “leaving” or “exiting.”

CERTAIN BASIS OF THE EXHORTATION IN THE REVELATION OF CHRIST AND SCRIPTURE

Peter reveals the reasons we can be confident in God’s Word.

Read 1:16–21.

Q 29: What does Peter mean by the phrase “cleverly devised myths” (v. 16)?

A 29: False teachers were claiming that the apostles’ teaching of the miracles of Jesus’ ministry and His death and resurrection were fictional inventions aimed at convincing the believers of a lie. Peter points out that he was an eyewitness of Jesus’ incredible actions and life. The things he and all the apostles taught and wrote were

the accounts of eyewitnesses simply reporting the things they had seen and heard.

Q 30: What event is Peter referring to in verses 16–18?

A 30: Peter refers to Jesus' transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–13; Mark 9:2–13; Luke 9:28–36), of which Peter himself was a witness with the brothers James and John. This wondrous event clearly demonstrated Jesus' power and glory as the Son of God and anticipated His second coming, which false teachers reject and ridicule.

Q 31: What was Jesus' majesty at the transfiguration?

A 31: This refers to Jesus' divine glory, which Peter, James, and John saw with their own eyes.

Q 32: How did Jesus receive honor and glory at His transfiguration?

A 32: The Father glorified His Son by revealing Jesus' divine glory to His three disciples. The Father honored Jesus by proclaiming, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Q 33: Why does Peter stress "we ourselves heard this very voice" in verse 18?

A 33: Peter wants to answer the charge that he and the others had devised clever myths. The Old Testament Law of Moses required the testimony of two or three witnesses to establish a matter (Deuteronomy 17:6). The testimony of three disciples, Peter, James, and John, established the genuine miracle of the transfiguration.

Q 34: What is the "prophetic word" Peter mentions in verse 19?

A 34: This refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, which all pointed to Jesus and are fulfilled perfectly in Him.

Q 35: Why does Peter compare the Scriptures to a light shining in a dark place?

A 35: False teachers lead people into darkness, error, and sin. Peter reminds us that the Bible guards and preserves us against this destruction. So, just as you would pay attention to the light beaming from a lamp in a dark room, pay attention to the Scriptures and ignore false teachings that only cast darkness and gloom.

Q 36: What is Peter referring to when he mentions that "the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (v. 19)?

A 36: Peter refers to the sight of Jesus' return on Judgment Day. When the light of Jesus shines clearly from His face, all false teachings will be completely exposed as lies.

Q 37: What is significant about verses 20 and 21?

- A 37: Verses 20 and 21 are the clearest explanation in the Bible of how the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture.
- Q 38: Why does Peter point out that prophecies of Scripture were never someone's own interpretation?**
- A 38: False teachers not only reject the apostles who wrote the New Testament but also the prophets who wrote the Old Testament. Peter makes it clear that the Old Testament prophets did not add their own thoughts or interpretations to the revelations God gave them. They wrote only the words God inspired them to write.
- Q 39: What does it mean that they were "carried along by the Holy Spirit" (v. 21)?**
- A 39: The Holy Spirit personally inspired each author of the Bible to write God's words in his own style. The Holy Spirit moved them, not their imaginations or their own clever thinking.

WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

In this chapter, Peter warns against false teachers who are trying to mislead believers.

ANTICIPATION OF FALSE TEACHERS

Peter warns that just as false teachers arose in Old Testament times, they were also appearing within the Church.

Read 2:1–3.

- Q 40: When did false prophets arise among the Israelites in the Old Testament?**
- A 40: A good example of this is found in Jeremiah 28, where Jeremiah exposes the false teachings of the prophet Hananiah.
- Q 41: What are *heresies*?**
- A 41: *Heresies* are simply false teachings, especially teachings that pose as truths. Heresies often promote personal rights and immorality that destroy saving faith.
- Q 42: What is Peter implying by saying "there will be false teachers among you"?**

- A 42: Peter implies that false teachers of 2 Peter did not come from outside the Church; they were members in good standing who drifted away from the truth and began introducing false doctrine in subtle, tempting ways.
- Q 43: What were the secret ways the false teachers used to bring in destructive heresies?**
- A 43: The false teachers pretended to be sincere and true. They began with the Scriptures, but then isolated verses from their context of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. They twisted God's Word around to justify their sinful, rebellious minds.
- Q 44: How do false teachers deny the Master, Jesus Christ?**
- A 44: Peter asserts that Jesus is the Master of all people—believers and unbelievers alike. But false teachers deny Him when they teach that there is no judgment—in other words, that Jesus Christ is ultimately not necessary for us.
- Q 45: Why does Peter remind his readers that Jesus bought the false teachers from sin too?**
- A 45: The salvation Jesus won on the cross is universal—He carried all peoples' sins and atoned for each and every person. These teachers were monstrosly throwing away their own salvation—as does anyone who believes false teachings and abandons Jesus Christ.
- Q 46: Explain the irony that Peter says the Lord is bringing swift destruction upon false teachers.**
- A 46: False teachers claim that Jesus will not return for judgment—but Christ will bring swift destruction upon them at that very judgment they deny.
- Q 47: What is implied by the phrase “many will follow their sensuality” in verse 2?**
- A 47: The implication is that many Christians will accept false teaching as authoritative and will follow its lure.
- Q 48: What is the sensuality of the false prophets?**
- A 48: The Greek word translated as “sensuality” refers to illicit sexual behavior. The teachings of the false prophets promoted sexual immorality and held a strong appeal for the sinful desires of Christians. Recent converts especially—who had just left that sort of lifestyle—would have felt a strong pull to be able to indulge their evil lusts and think God did not mind them doing so.
- Q 49: What does it mean that “the way of truth will be blasphemed” (v. 2)?**
- A 49: False teachers claim to be Christians, yet they defame, revile, and slander the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. They

give non-Christian neighbors the impression that Christ endorses sinful, selfish lifestyles.

Q 50: Why does Peter point out greed as the main motivation of false teachers?

A 50: The Greek word used here for “greed” is intense, portraying more than mere greed; it suggests insatiable greed. Peter wants Christ’s sheep to realize that false prophets only pretend to care about them. The truth is that they care only for themselves and for laying their hands on the possessions of God’s children.

Q 51: Why does Peter speak of the “false words” of the false teachers in verse 3?

A 51: Peter turns the false teachers’ claims against them. They claimed the prophets and apostles taught cleverly invented myths—yet the false teachers were the ones teaching cleverly invented myths to mislead God’s people.

Q 52: What does it mean that their condemnation “is not idle” and “their destruction is not asleep”?

A 52: It appears that false teachers go unpunished, as though Christ doesn’t know what they are doing. But Peter assures us Christ has already judged them and will send punishment and destruction upon them—and the same will overtake those who follow their evil teachings.

GOD DELIVERS THE RIGHTEOUS AND PUNISHES THE UNGODLY

Peter uses the three most renowned evildoers in the Old Testament to illustrate how God doesn’t always wait until Judgment Day to punish the wicked.

Read 2:4–10a.

Q 53: Why does Peter bring up the angels who rebelled against God?

A 53: If mighty angels like Satan were not spared punishment (a punishment the false teachers scoffed at) but were cast down from heaven, what makes puny, mortal false teachers think they will get away with their lies?

Q 54: Are some angels already in hell, confined and being punished?

A 54: Spirits do not have bodies that can be confined in chains like human bodies can. Peter means that God has set limits on Satan and the fallen angels that they cannot transgress. When they fell, they were judged and condemned, but their full confinement and punishment in hell will begin on Judgment Day. The English

Standard Version uses the phrase “gloomy darkness” to describe the lowest regions of hell reserved for the worst offenders.

Q 55: What is the “ancient world” spoken of in verse 5?

A 55: This refers to the descendants of Adam and Eve, who were destroyed by the flood in Noah’s day. Not a single one was able to escape God’s wrath. Likewise, false teachers deceive themselves if they think they will avoid God’s judgment.

Q 56: Why does Peter mention Noah’s rescue?

A 56: The Christians who heed Peter’s warning and avoid false teaching may find themselves in a minority. But Noah is an encouraging example of a believer who faithfully confessed God in an antagonistic world destined for destruction. God remembered him and provided a way of salvation by the ark.

Q 57: What does it mean to call Noah a “herald of righteousness” (v. 5)?

A 57: The Scriptures do not clearly state that Noah actually preached or spoke to warn the people about the coming flood, but certainly, the construction of the massive ark could not have gone unnoticed by his neighbors. Noah’s progress in completing the ark was a vivid object lesson that the day of God’s wrath was drawing near. Sadly, no one heeded the message of the ark except Noah’s wife, his three sons, and their three wives.

Q 58: What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah?

A 58: God rained down fire and brimstone from heaven to overturn the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their unrepentant sin. The inhabitants were completely destroyed, never to rise again. If none of them escaped, then neither will false teachers.

Q 59: Why does Peter go into depth discussing Lot’s torment?

A 59: We can examine our faith by comparing ourselves to Lot. Are we troubled and greatly distressed by the ungodly things of our culture? Then take comfort that in His time, God will rescue us from it and bring us into His perfect paradise. But if we have grown numb to the wicked culture around us, we would be wise to ask God to stir our hearts that we see things as He sees them.

Q 60: How was Lot “tormenting his righteous soul” (v. 8)?

A 60: Lot was troubled and felt great anguish because of the terrible things he saw his neighbors doing. That is why he insisted that the two strangers leave the public square and spend the night in his home. He thought they were mortal men and feared the wicked things his neighbors might do to them. Lot felt trapped in Sodom—he hated what he saw all around him but was powerless to change the circumstances.

Q 61: How do these three punishments (fallen angels, unbelievers in Noah's time, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah) help expose false teachers and turn believers away from them?

A 61: These examples remind us of the coming judgment and drive us to seek refuge in God before that great and dreadful day arrives.

DENUNCIATION OF THE MOTIVES, CHARACTER, AND MESSAGE OF THE FALSE TEACHERS

Peter exposes the motives of false teachers and strenuously warns his readers to avoid being entangled in their deceitful, destructive temptations.

Read 2:10b–22.

Q 62: What do the descriptors *bold* and *willful* reveal to us about these sinful misleaders?

A 62: *Bold* indicates that false teachers have no concern about the damage they do to others; they care only about their own pleasures. *Willful* indicates arrogance; false teachers presume that they know everything, and they close themselves off from learning when they are wrong and need correction.

Q 63: Who are the “glorious ones” being blasphemed by the false teachers (v. 10b)?

A 63: The “glorious ones” are the holy angels. False teachers should show humility and obey the message of God delivered by the angels. Instead, they reject the Law of God by claiming that in Christ, we are free from moral law.

It could also indicate their utter contempt for the idea that Christ will send His angels on Judgment Day to root out all evildoers and lawless men from creation.

Q 64: Why don't the holy angels pronounce judgment against false teachers?

A 64: False teachers blaspheme these mighty, glorious angels, yet the angels humbly continue to serve the saints despite the rage and chafe of such fools. The angels know judgment belongs to God and are confident He will vindicate them. They leave judgment and punishment to God. We would be wise to do the same.

Q 65: How are false teachers like “irrational animals” (v. 12)?

A 65: They are like prey animals whose destiny is to be captured and destroyed by predators. They are not using God's gift of human, rational thought, so there is no possible way they have any true, valid spiritual insight. They are like irrational animals, false

teachers led by Satan to their own slaughter, and they do not have the faintest idea their destruction is at hand.

Q 66: Why does Peter describe the punishment to come as their wages?

A 66: False teachers expect great profit from their teachings, but the only wage they earn is God's wrath and punishment, which they deny since they claim Christ will never come.

Q 67: What does it mean that they “revel in the daytime” (v. 13)?

A 67: They are shameless, parading their sexual sin around in public without any sorrow, guilt, or contrition. At least the pagans hide their shameful acts under the cover of darkness. These sinners do it in the daytime, bringing public shame and disgrace upon the congregation.

Q 68: Why does Peter call false teachers “blots and blemishes” on the Christian feasts? (v. 13)

A 68: False teachers have arisen from within the congregation. The feast they blot and blemish is Holy Communion itself. They pretend to be part of the flock, but in truth, they are hypocritical unbelievers whom Jesus will remove from His flock on the Last Day.

Q 69: Who are the “unsteady souls” that false teachers entice?

A 69: Unsteady souls include believers who are not firmly grounded in Scripture. They are easy prey for false teachers—like those Christians who convert to Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Islam, Judaism, or Hinduism, or abandon God altogether. This underscores the importance of regular Bible study and devotion.

Q 70: Who are the “accursed children” in verse 14?

A 70: Israelites were all considered to be children of Abraham, but those who did not believe would be cursed by God. Thus, false teachers are accursed children who reject Jesus Christ and will suffer eternal punishment from God as a result.

Q 71: What was “the way of Balaam, the son of Beor”?

A 71: Balaam was an ancient prophet of God during the forty years Israel wandered in the wilderness under Moses. He put wealth above faithful service and obedience to God. He was a mercenary prophet—a prophet for hire—offering his services to the highest bidder.

He was hired by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites but was unable to convince God to curse them, so ended up blessing them instead. When the king of Moab was angry, Balaam advised him to send Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men at a feast for Baal (see Numbers 25 and 31:16).

Q 72: What was Balaam's fate?

A 72: Balaam was killed by the army of Israel in Joshua 13:22. Notice the parallel: Balaam used sexual immorality to lure Israel to sin—just as false teachers use it to lure new Christians to sin. Just as Balaam's ultimate reward was death, so too will be the reward of false teachers.

Q 73: When did the donkey speak to Balaam?

A 73: When Balaam first set out with Moab's king, Balak, to curse Israel (Numbers 22:21–35), God sent an angel to kill him. Balaam did not see the angel, but his donkey did and turned from the road. Balaam beat the donkey for not obeying him. This happened three times before God finally gave the donkey the power of speech to confront Balaam, who finally saw the angel and realized he could not go against God in this matter. It is striking that God used a mute beast like a donkey to serve as His prophet to Balaam!

Q 74: What do “waterless springs” and “mists driven by a storm” reveal about false teachers (v. 17)?

A 74: When believers turn to false teachings to try to learn something precious, valuable, and eternal, they will be as bitterly disappointed as a thirsty man in a desert finding a dry spring or a farmer eagerly watching an approaching storm that fails to deliver rain.

Q 75: What does it mean that false teachers entice people?

A 75: The verb *entice* is similar to the noun for a fisherman's bait or lure, something flashy and shiny to capture prey. The lure is their loud boasts of folly, which sound very eloquent and persuasive. But a quick study of Scripture shows their flashy teachings are utterly foolish and worthless. They also use sensual, sexual passions of the flesh and the promise of freedom from divine Law to attract Christians who are eager to indulge their desires.

Q 76: Who are those “who are barely escaping from those who live in error” (v. 18)?

A 76: Peter is speaking of new converts to Christianity who have just left the sensual pagan lifestyle, but are still attracted to it. They hear the false teachers tell them they can safely indulge their sinful passions (especially sexual immorality) and still be righteous in God's eyes.

Q 77: What do we learn from Peter saying that those who had “escaped the defilements of the world” are “again entangled in them and overcome” (v. 20)?

A 77: We learn that some people who escape the lies of false teaches are lured back into a sinful lifestyle. It is possible for all Christians to fall away, so we should run to God in repentance, begging for His

forgiveness for Jesus' sake—assured that God forgives us for Jesus' sake.

Q 78: Why is it better to have never known the Gospel then to fall away from it?

A 78: First, it is harder for the Gospel to break through the hearts of people who have heard and rejected it than of those who never heard it. Second, God will punish those who knew the faith yet turned away from it much more severely than those who were ignorant of it. Those of us who are lifelong Christians face a grave punishment if we fall away from faith. Lord, have mercy on us!

Q 79: What do the illustrations of a dog returning to its vomit and a clean sow wallowing in the mire reveal to us?

A 79: These images are powerful teaching tools. When we are caught up in temptation, our sinful desires make sinful living seem appropriate—it just feels right. But these illustrations help us see these temptations from God's point of view: we are disgusted to imagine a dog eating the food it vomited, or a clean pig wallowing in mud. Would we, who should be smarter, end up doing the same thing spiritually?

ANSWERS TO SKEPTICISM REGARDING THE END OF THIS WORLD

Peter answers skeptics who ridicule those who await Christ's return.

Read 3:1–7.

Q 80: What is significant about Peter calling his readers “beloved”?

A 80: This harkens back to God the Father's declaration at Jesus' Baptism and transfiguration, when He called Jesus His beloved Son. Through faith in Jesus, we have been adopted into God's family as sons and daughters—we are His beloved.

Q 81: What were the predictions of the holy prophets in verse 2?

A 81: The predictions of the holy prophets are the books of the Old Testament.

Q 82: What were the commandments of Jesus given through the apostles?

A 82: The commandments of Jesus given through the apostles are the books of the New Testament. Peter was showing that both Testaments have equal standing because of Jesus Christ.

Q 83: Why does Peter call them “your apostles”?

A 83: Peter wants us to treasure the apostles as God’s precious gifts to us, much as we treasure a faithful pastor.

Q 84: What are scoffers? What are their sinful desires?

A 84: A scoffer is a cynical person who considers the teachings of Christ to be superstitious, foolish nonsense. They often feel superior to those who hold the views they reject. They consider their desires to be valid expressions of Christianity and indulge in the sinful behavior that stems from those desires.

Q 85: Who are “the fathers” mentioned by the scoffers in verse 4?

A 85: False teachers would want to make the span of time in which nothing “miraculous” happened as long as they could, so this refers to distant fathers, namely, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Of course, they fail to remember that Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction occurred during Abraham’s life.

Q 86: What do the scoffers claim in verse 4?

A 86: Peter says that scoffers will ridicule believers for trusting that Jesus will come again. Because Christ had not returned in the several decades since His ascension, some falsely concluded that Christ would never return. They believed the world was immutable—that the same processes they saw taking place day-to-day always had been in the past and always would be in the future without any outside, divine interference.

This is similar to the idea that the universe is billions of years old and that any structure on earth (like the Grand Canyon) must have taken millions of years to form. Scoffers trust their own observations (from a very narrow viewpoint and short segment of time) rather than God’s clear Word.

Q 87: What fact do they “deliberately overlook” in verses 5–6?

A 87: Peter cites three events from the Bible where God intervened or will intervene in creation. The first is creation itself. God created the heavens and earth out of nothing, by His Word alone. Though the new earth was in chaos, wrapped in water, without form and void, God used His Word to bring order and form to it, filling it with plants and animals. He also actively sustains it, otherwise it would fall into chaos again. He alone chooses how long creation will stand and if He wants to preserve or destroy it.

Q 88: What did the Word of God have to do with the waters?

A 88: God created the water-wrapped earth by His Word. Next, God brought forth the land out of the water by His Word. Then, in His second divine intervention, He used those same waters in a devastating, worldwide flood to destroy the sinful world—again, by His Word (Genesis 6–8).

Q 89: How does that past punishment point to the future?

A 89: We live in the very same heaven and earth that was destroyed by the flood. God’s third intervention is His Word storing up our present world to be destroyed by fire on the Last Day. This means that God continues to uphold and protect creation, sustaining life on our planet until the day Christ returns. It doesn’t hang together by itself or by pure chance.

Having demonstrated the fact that God indeed intervenes in His creation when He chooses, Peter turns to address why there has been such a long delay—for us, more than 2000 years.

Read 3:8–10.

Q 90: When Peter says “one day is as a thousand years” to God, is he providing us a numerical formula to calculate the day of Jesus’ return (v. 8)?

A 90: No. Peter says a day is *as* (like) a thousand years, not equal to it. Since God is eternal, His perspective of time is very different than that of we creatures who are bound by it. Peter is saying that a time period that may seem to be extremely long to us and to scoffers is not long at all to God.

When the moment comes, God will move extremely quickly. Instead of trying to calculate the day of Christ’s return (which is for God alone to determine), we should busy ourselves by obeying Christ’s command to make disciples of all nations through preaching and teaching.

Q 91: Why is God waiting so long (two thousand years and counting) to send Jesus for Judgment Day?

A 91: This is not because God is slow but because He is patient. Out of His tremendous love, He wants everyone to have the chance to repent and be forgiven—and for each generation of His elect to be born and to be brought to faith. Consider how long God waited to send the flood, even waiting patiently after his announcement for Noah to complete the construction of the ark and bring all the food and animals safely inside. God gives sinners every opportunity to repent before it is too late.

Q 92: What does the phrase “will come like a thief” really mean (v. 10)?

A 92: This means that the Last Day will come at a time that is completely unexpected; it will suddenly be upon us with no time left to prepare. The point here is how surprised people will be when Jesus suddenly appears.

Also, a thief uncovers our human vulnerability—no matter how secure we think we can make ourselves, we are vulnerable. But the possessions we think we own are not really ours. They all belong to Jesus Christ, who created them—and so do we, vulnerable as we are.

Q 93: What will happen to the heavens and the heavenly bodies (stars) when Christ appears?

A 93: The heavens and heavenly bodies will be destroyed with a roar, or with very loud noise, great force, and speed. It's hard to imagine, but God's Word declares it. Consider the fourth day of creation, when God placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens. These parts of the old creation will pass away, and the heavens will return to chaos before Christ creates the new heavens for us.

Q 94: What does it mean that “the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (v. 10)?

A 94: This means that the earth will be exposed to God's cleansing fire so that all ungodliness will be removed; then we will be able to live in a new heaven and a new earth untainted by sin and corruption. All the accomplishments and constructions in which mankind takes so much pride will be exposed as nothing—worse than nothing—if the intention of such works was to glorify mankind and not God.

Q 95: Will creation be annihilated and a completely new one created, or will it simply be renewed?

A 95: Scripture makes it clear that our bodies will not be destroyed, and completely new, different bodies will not be created for us. Instead, our bodies will be raised and glorified. So, for humanity, the end will bring renewal. Even dead unbelievers will be raised in their same bodies to be tormented eternally in hell.

But as for the nonhuman creation, Peter's language describes destruction, followed by a new creation filled with righteousness.

FINAL EXHORTATION

ON THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN EXPECTATION AND HOPE

The Lord's delay to send Christ for judgment should fill the Church with urgency to repent and work at our mission to make disciples of all nations.

Read 3:11–18.

Q 96: List the material possessions that mean the most to you. What impact does it have to realize they will be dissolved by fire on the Last Day?

A 96: This exercise helps us reevaluate our priorities so that we place God first. So often, we let worldly things consume all our time and attention, but those things will all wear out or dissolve in flame eventually.

Q 97: How can the realization that all earthly things will be destroyed and all people will be judged lead us to establish new priorities in our lives?

A 97: Reexamining the earthly goals we have set for our lives in light of Judgment Day can help us remember what is truly important and lasting. Basing our values and choices on our culture is foolish because our culture will pass away and perish. Proper reflection leads us to set new goals more aligned with the will of God for His creation and all humanity.

Q 98: What is meant by “waiting for . . . the coming of the day of God” (v. 12)?

A 98: We remember Christ's coming frequently, if not constantly. We also joyously anticipate that day because it will mean an end of all human suffering, crime, war, death, and the natural disasters that plague us. Every problem in life that vexes us should lead us to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20) and “Your kingdom come” (Matthew 6:10).

Q 99: Are we able to hasten or move up the coming of the Day of God?

A 99: Our human actions can never manipulate God into changing His determined timetable. Peter does not mean that God will move up His timing by a month, a year, a decade, or a century because we have completed some necessary action. One reason God waits involves His patience for the birth of future generations of people whose names are written in the Book of Life.

Instead, Peter is speaking from our earthly perspective. The more we contemplate Christ's return (each time we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus," for instance), we keep our eyes in the right place. As the years fly by, that day comes ever nearer. At the same time, as we live more sanctified, Christlike lives with great joy, kindness, peace, patience, and love, we give others a hint of how life will be in the new heavens and the new earth.

Q 100: What thoughts fill your mind when you contemplate the new heavens and the new earth for which we wait?

A 100: Answers will vary, but we can look to the future, when Christ will remove the curse from His glorious creation with great anticipation, confidence, and joy. All suffering, decay, and death will be forever removed, and life will be as perfect as it was always meant to be.

As we await that day, passing through times of suffering, want, grief, pain, or distress, the thought of that glorious future can give us peace and patience, knowing our problems will eventually pass away and our joy will be everlasting. It will definitely be worth the wait.

Q 101: What does it mean "to be diligent to be found . . . without spot or blemish" at Christ's return (v. 14)?

A 101: This is the kind of language the Book of Leviticus uses to describe acceptable sacrifices, which, in the tabernacle and temple, pointed ahead to Jesus' spotless offering on the cross. In our Baptism, Christ cleanses us of all the spots and blemishes of our sins.

Peter uses these words to encourage us to offer our lives by faith as sacrifices to serve God and to show the world the spotless and blemish-less creatures God has made us to be. Then, when Christ examines us on the Last Day, we will be found pure and clean through faith in Him.

Q 102: Where can we find the power to do the things Peter commands?

A 102: This is often called a Gospel command—that is, we can read Peter's words as Christ commanding us to do something that we are incapable of doing without Him providing the strength to do it. Think of Jesus commanding dead Lazarus to "come out" of his grave (John 11:43). In itself, Lazarus's dead body had no power to obey. But the Word of Christ restored him to life and gave him the strength to walk out of the grave.

Q 103: What does it mean to "count the patience of our Lord as salvation" (v. 15)?

A 103: The “patience of our Lord” is that God does not immediately punish our sin and transgression, but gives us time to repent, trust in Christ’s salvation, and be saved by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the reason Christ’s return for judgment is delayed—this time before Judgment Day is His loving desire to save all mankind.

Q 104: Is Peter criticizing Paul’s writings in verse 16?

A 104: No. Some people read Galatians 2:11–21, where Paul publicly rebuked Peter, and conclude that the two disciples never got along after that. But Peter’s comments here show that nothing could be further from the truth. He calls Paul “our beloved brother”—hardly the words of someone holding a grudge. Peter affirms that he and Paul are working together in a shared ministry to which Christ has called each of them.

Peter cites Paul’s epistles to confirm what he has written in this letter, proving that the two apostles agree on this topic. Notice how Peter credits Paul’s wisdom as coming from God: “Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him” (v. 15)—that is, given to Paul by God.

Peter adds that all of Paul’s letters were consistent in teaching true doctrine, and thus were truly the Word of God that Paul was inspired to write.

Peter confirms that some of the things in Paul’s writings are difficult to understand, but instead of criticizing Paul, he criticizes those who intentionally distort Paul’s words (particularly the false teachers earlier in the letter who twist Paul’s words and encourage Christians to indulge their sinful desires). Notice Peter’s comment that they distort the other Scriptures as well, not just Paul’s. The fault is completely on these false teachers, not Paul or any other author of Scripture.

Q 105: What does Peter say of these false teachers?

A 105: Peter implies that the false teachers are unlearned, meaning they do not have a deep enough understanding of Scripture to be able to correctly understand what Paul is writing without distorting it as they try to teach it.

They also twist the words of Scripture, that is, wrench them out of their proper context so that they say something different than what the Holy Spirit-inspired author intended to say.

Q 106: What is the end for these false teachers who are distorting Scripture?

A 106: The end of the false teachers is swift destruction, the judgment previously described. Sadly, false teachers bring it on themselves,

even though Christ calls them to the repentance that would bring forgiveness and peace.

Q 107: What encouragement does Peter give in verse 17?

A 107: Since Peter has warned his readers of the false teachers' tricks, he encourages his readers to guard themselves, being careful not to lose the anchor of Scripture and fall for the traps of the false teachers.

Q 108: How can we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ?

A 108: We can do this by continuing to study the Scriptures and by receiving the precious Sacraments of the Lord.

Q 109: How does Peter's final word of praise ("To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity") reinforce what he has been saying throughout this letter?

A 109: Peter summarizes all that he has said in this letter by speaking of Jesus' present glory and the glory that will be displayed to all at Jesus' second coming. Christ will be glorified for rescuing us from the judgment coming on this evil age, guarding us from the false teachers who would deceive us, and bringing us to the new heavens and the new earth.