

2 Peter Chapter 2:1-3

Expectation for Future Apostasy

Hymns: #25 Praise To The Lord The Almighty #71 Our God Our Help In Ages Past

During the 1982 war in the Falkland Islands between England and Argentina, the Royal Navy's 3,500-ton destroyer HMS Sheffield was sunk by a single missile fired from an Argentine fighter jet. It caused some people to wonder if modern surface warships were obsolete, sitting ducks for today's sophisticated missiles. But a later check revealed that the Sheffield's defences did pick up the incoming missile, and the ship's computer correctly identified it as a French-made Exocet missile. But the computer had been programmed to ignore Exocet missiles as "friendly." The Sheffield was sunk by a missile it saw coming and could have evaded. Sadly a lot of men lost their lives.

What is even sadder is that many people are losing their eternal or spiritual lives by allowing themselves to be "programmed" to accept false teachers as "friendly". Thus, like the Sheffield, they cannot properly compute the Scriptural warnings of future apostasy and in the end will be sunk.

Having taught us the value, virtues and verification of knowledge followed by the calibrating voices of the Apostolic, Divine and Prophetic in chapter 1, Peter now turns his attention in Chapter 2 to warn us of the Counterfeits. We'll break this chapter down into three sections. Today, we'll see the **"Expectation for Future Apostasy"**; next Sunday we'll look at the **"Examples from Past Judgements"**; and the following Sunday we'll see the **"Explanation of Present Characteristics of False Teachers"**.

Our text this morning is just the first three verse of 2 Peter 2: "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping."

1. There Will Be False Teachers Among You (V.1)

The first thing we must come to expect is that there WILL BE false teachers among the churches. Peter didn't say there might be; he didn't say he wasn't sure or that it was a possibility. He said there WILL BE false teachers among you. He also gave us a clear analogy when he warns us that the false teachers among us will be like the false prophets in Israel's past. So what did the false prophets in Israel's past look like?

The true prophet Jeremiah gives us a crystal clear view of them in three passages:

Jeremiah 6:13-15 "From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. 14 They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace. 15 Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush."

- The first thing we notice about false teachers then is they are greedy for gain. They are actually serving the spirit of Mammon not God. They think godliness is a means to financial gain.
- They practice deceit; they are not what they seem; they're a sham without integrity.
- They don't treat sin properly. They don't tell people the truth about how serious sin is; they redefine what the Bible calls sin into the culturally accepted definition of the day.

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- They preach tolerance and equality when there should be no tolerance of known sin and there is no equality in doctrinal error.
- They are unashamed of their conduct and teaching. They have lost the sensitivity to even blush at what is so obviously shameful.

Jeremiah 14:13-14 gives us another characteristic: “But I said, “Ah, Sovereign LORD, the prophets keep telling them, ‘You will not see the sword or suffer famine. Indeed, I will give you lasting peace in this place.’” 14 Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds.”

- Here we see they deny the reality of coming judgement. They tell lies about how there is nothing to fear or to prepare for; they are eschatologically asleep.
- They also deny the reality of final judgement. They deny the reality of Hell and instead teach annihilationism, or else universalism. Either way, “Hell is off the menu” for them as one such false teacher/ blogger said recently.

Jeremiah gives us one more sobering insight in 5:30-31: “A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: 31 The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way.

And my people love it this way! Why? Why did Israel love lying prophets and why do many professing Christians love false teachers? The answer is because what they teach is easy, comfortable and popular. There is nothing they say that really challenges people to have to face themselves, their sin and their shadow selves they masquerade around in. To face that stuff is not easy...it is life giving however, but it’s not easy. So, because most people don’t want to face that stuff, they love false teachers. They also love false teachers because they make them feel comfortable rather than convicted. Finally, people love false teachers because its popular; they do not have the internal fortitude to own their own unique self in a world filled with voices contrary to the Gospel because they are cowards at heart and don’t want to be rejected by a godless society. So they go along with the popular trends agenda of the cultural moment.

And note very carefully where Peter says these false teachers will be located. Not in the world in general, but “among you”. That is, among the churches and believers. Paul warned the Ephesian elders at Miletus of this when he told them “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31). As has been rightly said: “You can tell the sheep are in trouble when the shepherd starts talking kindly to the wolf!”

Let me ask you two questions? First, if Peter and Paul saw this in their day and warned their hearers 2000 years ago, do you think their warnings are more or less relevant in our day and age? Secondly, do you take this warning serious; are you on your guard; are testing the spirits? (1 John 4:1)

2. They Will Secretly Introduce Heresy (v. 1b)

The second half of v. 1 tells us “They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves.” Again, Peter didn’t say

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they might; he didn't say he wasn't sure if they would. He said they WILL secretly introduce destructive and damnable heresies."

Notice their "modus operandi". First, they do this secretly. They are not "up front with you" about their true beliefs. They hide them; what you see is NOT what you get. They illustrate perfectly the meaning of Jesus' Parable of the Leaven in Matthew 13: 33 "He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast/ leaven that a woman took and mixed (lit. hid- ἐνέκρυψεν- "encrypted") into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Notice she hid it; she "encrypted" it. This is just how false teachers operate. They hide their false teaching by encrypting it in their teaching so that it's not so easily discerned.

This leaven is a picture of false doctrine and heresy. We know this from what Jesus told his disciples. He said "But be on your guard against the yeast (leaven) of the Pharisees and Sadducees." 12 Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matthew 16:11-12). The "teaching of the Pharisees" represents mere externalism in religion. Jesus pronounced 6 woes on this externalism when he blasted the Pharisees in Matt. 23. The "teaching of the Sadducees" represent the liberal, sceptics who deny both the Scriptures and the supernatural. Jesus rebuked them in Matthew 22:29 saying "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God". The "Herodians" are a third form of leaven we are to be on guard against. These represent carnality, worldliness and political alliances. (Matthew 22: 16-21).

Leaven, once mixed into a batch of flour, is invisible and works silently, slowly and steadily until the entire batch of dough is puffed up; bloated with the natural gases leaven produces. While this process is nice in bread, it is destructive in the church. These false doctrines and heresies are about as useful as the bloated, flatulent gasses false teachers shamelessly release in the Church...and about as enjoyable to smell.

The literal meaning of the Greek word translated here as "introduce" literally means "to bring in alongside". False teachers rarely make frontal assaults on the true doctrine. Rather, they give an impression of doctrinal faithfulness, while "bringing in alongside" their flatulent heresies. Then, after a while, they simply withdraw the truth and leave their false doctrine in place. By that time it's usually too late to save the sheep that have grown accustomed to it.

This is just like the greedy farmer who, resisting the cost of the oats he fed his mule, decided to gradually substitute sawdust in its diet. Everything went fine for a while- but by the time the mule was satisfied with sawdust, he died. The same is true spiritually. The changeover from truth to error is sometimes a slow process and the people don't always know the difference. But, before you know it, they're dead." ¹

Peter tells us in this verse that these false teachers "deny the sovereign Lord who **bought them**". This doesn't mean that these teachers are saved, they are not. This is easily clarified when we remember our theology from Romans 3 and how redemption, which means "to buy in the market", along with reconciliation and propitiation are the universal accomplishments in the finished work of Christ. Everyone, even false teachers have been redeemed and reconciled. (2 Cor. 5:19-20). But a person is not saved, that is justified, until he receives this grace by faith. (John 1:12). This is the very thing these false teachers have not done. They are lost, condemned and will be judged as will be seen in v. 3 and v. 13.

¹ Michael P. Green; *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*; 1982; Baker Books; (p.23)

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The number of heresies that have been introduced, and thankfully rejected, throughout church history is quite staggering. I don't think we can truly appreciate the shoulders of the men of faith on which we stand today, and their courage and faithfulness to say "NO! That is NOT God". Consider just this brief list of heresies that have "denied the Sovereign Lord who bought them"

Adoptionism - God granted Jesus powers and then adopted him as a Son.

- **Albigenses - Reincarnation and two gods: one good and other evil.**
- **Apollinarianism - Jesus' divine will overshadowed and replaced the human.**
- **Arianism - Jesus was a lesser, created being.**
- **Docetism - Jesus was divine but only seemed to be human.**

Donatism - Validity of sacraments depends on character of the minister.

Eutychianism - Jesus finite human nature is swallowed up in His infinite divine nature.

Gnosticism - Dualism of good and bad and special knowledge for salvation.

Kenosis - Jesus gave up some divine attributes while on earth.

- **Marcionism - An evil God of the O.T., good God of the N.T. 11, books in the Canon**

Modalism - God is one person in three modes.

Monarchianism - God is one person.

Monophysitism - Jesus had only one nature: divine.

- **Nestorianism - Jesus was two persons.**

Patricianism - The Father suffered on the cross.

Pelagianism - Man is unaffected by the fall and can keep all of God's laws.

Semi-Pelagianism - Man and God cooperate to achieve man's salvation.

- **Socinianism - Denial of the Trinity. Jesus is a deified man.**
- **Subordinationism - The Son is lesser than the Father in essence and or attributes.**
- **Tritheism - The Trinity is really three separate gods.²**

While many of these heresies have been overcome, many of them continue to spawn cults today. I have read estimates of there being 3,000 plus "Christian cults" in the U.S. alone. Denial of the Virgin Birth; the deity of Jesus; the Trinity; salvation by faith alone; heaven and hell are some of the bigger ticket theological heresies that deny our Lord who bought us. But equally, evolution, the redefinition of marriage, gender fluidly, endorsing homosexuality as a biblically accepted norm are nearing a universal norm in this dark world and they too deny our Lord which will bring about the swift destruction of both those who serve up and those who eat this sawdust.

3. Many Will Follow Their Shameful Ways (V. 2)

Again, Peter didn't say there might be a few; he didn't say he wasn't sure how many if any would follow their shameful ways. He said MANY WILL. Do you believe this? Do you have a hard time accepting that many, maybe even most, especially in the later days will follow these religious charlatans? Do you find it hard to accept that MANY, not a few, that now fill the pews and chairs of much of professing Christendom are being fed sawdust and they are blindly eating it?

If so, let us remember that first parable of the Sower which Jesus gave to describe what this age would be like between His ascension and His return. The first seed sown never even took root. The second seed took root but died before it could grow because of the shallowness and stony ground of their hearts. The third seed took root and grew up but never bore fruit because it was choked out by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust for other things. And of the fourth seed that took root, grew and bore fruit it did so to varying degrees; some a 100 fold, some 60 and some 30. Without trying to specify an unequivocal 25% return on every seed sowing investment, it is

² *Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry*

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worth noting in this parable that only 1/4th of the seed sown actually produced any fruit. And notice the trajectory of that fruitfulness. It is in ever diminishing amounts as time goes on, so much so that Jesus went on to ask in Luke 18:8 “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find **THE** faith on the earth?” The greek construction implies a rhetorical question with an obvious answer of “No, He will not find THE faith on the earth when he comes.”

So, just how many is MANY today? Perhaps this might give us some indication:

A new joint study by Barna and Summit Ministries looked at the worldviews of practicing Christians. The results aren't flattering.

“Among other things, it found that only 17 percent (that is only 1 in 6) of Christians have what the researchers consider a biblical worldview. For that definition, Barna provides these markers: “believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.” (<https://relevantmagazine.com/slice/research-only-17-of-christians-actually-have-a-biblical-worldview/>) Only 17 out of 100 professed Christians have a biblical world view! Ouch!

“Based on the study, 61 percent of practicing Christians strongly agree with at least one of the ideas of “new spirituality” (for example)—that everyone is praying to the same god/ultimate being, regardless of the name they use for it (28 percent); “that meaning and purpose come from becoming one with all that is” (27 percent); and that good deeds are rewarded with good and bad deeds receive bad in turn (32 percent). (<https://relevantmagazine.com/slice/research-only-17-of-christians-actually-have-a-biblical-worldview/>) In other words, 1 in every 3 professing Christians believes things like “Allah” is God and “Karma”! Ouch again!

Perhaps even less flattering are the results of a 2008 Pew Forum survey which found at that time:

“A majority of all American Christians (52%- more than half) think that at least some non-Christian faiths can lead to eternal life. Indeed, among Christians who believe many religions can lead to eternal life, 80% name at least one non-Christian faith that can do so. (<http://www.pewforum.org/2008/12/18/many-americans-say-other-faiths-can-lead-to-eternal-life/>) In other words, 1 out every 2 professing American Christians do not believe that Jesus Christ is the **ONLY** Way to eternal life.

Folks these are not insignificant numbers. Peter was absolutely right when he said MANY.

Peter says many will follow their “shameful ways”. The meaning of the Greek word Peter used here means “an insolent disregard of moral decency; outrageous conduct, conduct shocking to public decency”. It is translated as shameful, filthy, and licentious. It “refers to debased sexually immoral practices.”³ We are living in an age where people do not even blush with shame anymore at what not too many years ago was unthinkable. A growing insolent disregard of moral decency is to be expected in the world. But when it appears within Christendom, you know false teachers have been successful. A tell-tale sign today of false teachers is their departure from strong, biblical teaching on sexual morality; a “fudging” on upholding the biblical definition of marriage and refusing to identify homosexuality as sexual sin and unbecoming of any Christian who names Jesus' Name.

³ Kenneth O. Gangel; *2 Peter; The Bible Knowledge Commentary- An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty; 1983; SP Publications (p. 870)*

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These teachers will also “bring the way of truth into disrepute”. The days are long gone when identifying yourself as a Christian could draw at least a modicum of respect from the world. However, today, with the child sexual abuse scandals; the shameless greed of the money grubbing televangelists and the marital infidelities of high profile Christians have brought the way of truth, that is Jesus Christ and the Bible, into such disrepute that we are living in a post Christian society. “Few things hinder the cause of Christ like the bad reputation of professing Christians who are members of orthodox churches”.⁴

4. Greed Is Their Motive (V. 3)

3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.”

The second key feature of false teachers’ “modus operandi” is their greed. Again if we look at the false prophets of Israel’s past we see greed as their core motivation and thus of the false teachers of the present. Micah 3:11 “Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money.” The level of shameless greed that is broadcast on cable television by the prosperity gospel preachers is truly staggering. It is big business. But whilst staggering, we should not be surprised, for this IS what Peter said would happen. They are actually just another strong indicator of the truth of the Bible just as Peter says in v. 14 “they are experts in greed”.

Peter says they will “exploit you with stories they have made up. He says they will literally “make an emporium of you with their plastic words”. An emporium is a place for trading, a place to make a gain by exchanging, bartering, or investing. False teachers bring their wild and exotic wares into the Church, transforming it into an emporium; a bazaar where they get unstable people to buy the lies they peddle. Peter says they are merchandisers of you. They do this primarily through their plastic words. Plastic is malleable; it can be formed into just about any shape; it can be twisted. This is just what these false teachers do with their words. They twist them and reshape the true meaning of things into lies. They may use our Christian vocabulary, but they sure don’t use our Christian dictionary. They themselves are plastic men selling worthless plastic worldly trinkets to the naïve. The NIV’s translation here is very good. They do this primarily by telling stories they have made up. They don’t teach expositively through the Bible or teach doctrine. Instead, they operate with rambling stories brought in alongside little Scriptural canapés and vignettes here and there. This is like chaff compared to the wheat of exegeting the milk and meat of the Word of God to the people of God. It’s the saw dust that killed the farmers mule.

As we conclude hearing Peter’s warning to expect a coming apostasy, he reminds us that these charlatans are not getting away with anything. “Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” God is not slumbering while this is going on. He sees and knows. Their condemnation is coming as we shall see clearly in the next message. It is a fearful and sobering thing to look into the faces of these peddlers and know that a Christless eternity awaits them.

Let us not be naïve, or allow ourselves to be incorrectly programmed to ignore the inbound missile threat of false teachers and be sunk like the HMS Sheffield was. Rather, let’s take heed of Peter’s warning. There **will be** false teachers among us; **they will** secretly introduce destructive heresies and **many will** follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. Let’s not be found among them.

Let us pray...

⁴ Warren Wiersbe; Be Alert; Victor Books; 1987 (p. 40)