

Bible Study # 45
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General Epistles Series—I & II Peter

This evening we **will be in the books of I and II Peter**. The Apostle Peter wrote them and they are called by his name. I Peter was written in the early-to-mid 60s A.D. We would date it approximately 65 A.D. II Peter we would date two to three years later—perhaps the winter of 67-68 A.D. There was not a long period between them. II Peter was clearly written at the very end of Peter's life. It was written, evidently, after the martyrdom of Paul or at least right around that time. Peter was martyred within a matter of months after Paul. II Peter would have been written shortly prior to Peter's martyrdom. We'll notice some of that as we go through the books.

The book of **I Peter was written and addressed primarily to Israelite Christians scattered in the area that is up along the southern and western shore of the Black Sea—the area of what is now northern Turkey**. This is an area in which Paul never went.

I Peter 1:1, you might just notice here, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion [KJV, “strangers”—a term that was utilized to refer to Israelites] in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.”

If you have a map in the back of your Bible, let's notice a little bit of the sequence of these areas; let's notice where they are located. You will notice that they are coming across from east to west. It comes across from Pontus, to the areas of Galatia and Cappadocia, to Asia, then to Bithynia. We're moving across from east to west.

As far as Galatia is concerned, there were two portions of Galatia—northern and southern Galatia. It's pretty clear, when we put the whole picture together, that northern Galatia was addressed by Peter. Southern Galatia is the area where Paul went. We know that the portions where Paul went are Derbe, Iconium and Lystra—those areas down on the southern portion of Galatia.

There was a difference in the peoples. The peoples scattered along the southern shore of the Black Sea were the remnants of some of the Israelite tribes that had been settled in those areas. In fact, the Gauls who crossed the Black Sea and invaded Europe gave their name to what is now known as modern-day France. Gaul and Galatia

are both derived from the same word. The Gauls inhabited northern Galatia. It is from the southern coast of the Black Sea that the Gauls invaded Europe. The Gauls were ancestors of the French people, some of whom were actually settled in this area at that time.

Gaul, if you check it out, was derived from the Hebrew, “Galad,” which was a form of Gilead. Gaul came to be applied to the descendants of Reuben because the land that Reuben anciently settled in was on the east side of the Jordan River in what is now modern-day Jordan. The east side of the Jordan River was the land of Gilead. That tribe was, in some cases, simply referred to as Gilead from the geographic location-place name. That's where Reuben settled at the time when Joshua brought the Israelites across to their inheritance (Joshua 13:8). This term “Galad” or “Golwa” is derived from “Gilead.” It is the term from which Galatia was derived. They gave their name to that area of the southern portion of the Black Sea, and it was the name they took on up into Europe. That is just kind of an aside, but it's where the name came from.

Galatia came to be applied as a general place-name to central Asia Minor. At the time of the New Testament apostles, the southern portion of what had come to be designated by the Romans as Galatia was basically Greek Gentiles, but in the northern portion close to the Black Sea were Israelites.

We would note, when Peter begins to address these locations of Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Asia and Bithynia, he is addressing—as you would come from east to west, going from Pontus to Cappadocia to Galatia, to Bithynia, to Asia—what would be a mail route. You can track that out, and it would make like a little bit of a circle around that area. That would be the logical sequence if you were coming from the east to the west.

I bring that up because Peter says in I Peter that he is writing from the city of Babylon.

I Peter 5:13, he says, “the Church that is at Babylon salutes you.” The city of Babylon, which Peter referred to, was a city that was built nearby but not exactly upon the location of ancient Babylon. It was the capital of the Parthian Empire in the east. There was still a very significant Israelite settlement in that area. There was a Jewish community in Babylon itself. Babylon is where Peter clearly spent a goodly portion of the latter years of his ministry. His headquarters was based from Babylon.

The Parthian Empire was what lay east of the Roman Empire. It was east of the River Euphrates, which meant it would include, let's say, portions of modern-day Iraq and virtually all of modern-day Iran. It stretched on into portions of what we would term today as Pakistan or India—kind of stretching up the border area of Pakistan and India, but it primarily consisted of Iran and portions of Iraq today. It was a sizable empire to the east.

I bring it up because there isn't any evidence that Peter was in Rome. Peter was not the first pope and he was not in Rome. There isn't any evidence that he was there, and there is plenty of evidence to show that he wasn't there. One of the most clear-cut evidence that Peter wasn't in Rome is that when Paul wrote the book of Romans, he saluted people by name. He is greeting them by name in the end of the book (Romans 16). Greetings to "so-and-so," to this one, and that one—he goes through and addresses them by name. He says "hello" to more people in the book of Romans than in any other book that he wrote, and he never so much as mentioned Peter.

Now, if Peter was the pope in Rome and Paul writes a letter to the Roman church and says "hello" to everybody except Peter, it would be quite an insult. Also, Paul wrote the book of Romans and told the Romans, "I am anxious to come to you in order that you might be established" (Romans 1:11). Again, that would have been a terrible insult if Peter had been there since the mid-40s A.D. (according to the Catholic tradition, since about 44 or 45 A.D.) in the position of pope or bishop of Rome. That would have been a terrible insult. But obviously Peter was not there.

In fact, the Catholic Church is confronted with a dilemma because when Peter wrote I Peter 5:13, it is obvious he was writing from Babylon. You know what they say? Look it up in the Catholic Encyclopedia or Catholic Commentaries. They say that by Babylon, Peter really meant Rome. They say he was utilizing that name as symbolic of Rome. Why doesn't Babylon symbolize Rome, especially when you read of it in the book of Revelation? If Babylon symbolizes Rome when you read of it in Revelation, then why doesn't it symbolize it in the book of I Peter? If it does, it's got some pretty rough stuff to say about it. They're kind of on the "horns of a dilemma."

The book of Revelation is written in symbolism. Symbolic terms are used. But I Peter isn't written in symbolic terms. When it mentions Babylon, he

means Babylon. He is talking about a geographic place-name, not using terms in a symbolic way. There isn't any evidence that Babylon was used to refer to Rome until John wrote the book of Revelation, and it was utilized in a prophetic sense. The only thing the Catholic Church has come up with to try to put Peter in Rome is the fact that he said he wrote from Babylon and that Babylon was a reference to Rome in this particular case.

If he had been writing from Rome, his letter would have been traveling from the west to the east, and logically it would have been addressed to Asia, Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia—or something of that sort. The letter would have traveled in a different way. When you look at the way the letter traveled, it is clear the letter came from the east to the west. It first went to Pontus, then down to Cappadocia, across to Galatia, up into Asia and up to Bithynia. It made the logical mail route coming from east to west. I think we can dismiss the idea that Peter was writing from Rome.

The only reason to identify Babylon that Peter wrote from with Rome is in order to preserve the Catholic tradition that Peter was in Rome as the first pope. We will go into that in a later Bible study on the history of the first-century Church (the lost century) and who the first pope really was. Some of these things can be interesting and intriguing. We don't have time to get into all of the details this evening.

It's clear from Matthew 10:5-6 that we would expect Peter to be writing primarily to an Israelite audience because that was the commission that Jesus gave to the 12 apostles. In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus told the twelve not to go into the way of the Gentiles, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Now, Paul was sent as the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:7-8). God's work was organized.

God has always been the author of organization. He didn't have the various apostles tripping over one another, each going into the other's area and territory. I don't go over into other areas to do visiting and counseling or another minister coming over here to visit and counsel—just kind of "hodge-podge" around. There is organization. Galatians 2 makes it plain that Paul was assigned as the apostle to the Gentiles, just as Peter and the twelve were to the ten tribes of the house of Israel. We have that as a background for I Peter.

II Peter was written basically to the same audience. It was written a little later, right at the end of Peter's life. It was written at a time when,

as we are going to see, the mystery of iniquity was at work and making inroads into the Church. Some of these Samaritans were utilizing many spurious gospels and epistles in order to trigger their deception. There were a lot of books that were, supposedly, written by some of the apostles. There were books that purported to be gospels accounts or epistles from some of the apostles.

II Peter is written as a warning to the Church and also to demonstrate the need of a clear canon of New Testament Scripture that Peter was responsible for introducing at the end of his life. It was written just prior to his arrest and execution. We will note some of that. Let's just briefly survey the books. We will note certain material as we go through it.

He addresses in I Peter 1:1, "...the pilgrims [KJV, "strangers"]..." in this area of what we would term northern Turkey.

He addresses those who are the elect.

Verse 2, "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied." Elect simply means "chosen"; to elect is to choose. The elect are those whom God has chosen to be a part of the firstfruits. We are elect "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." God has determined ahead of time that we would have the *opportunity* of being part of the firstfruits. We're elect! What makes us elect? What sets the elect apart? We are set apart "through sanctification of the Spirit." We're set apart and made holy by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. We are set apart through God's Spirit; the Spirit of God dwelling in us makes us holy. We are set apart to exemplify God's way through 'obedience and through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.'

Verse 3, we are reminded, "...according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We have a hope that is living, a hope that is alive—not a hope that is dead. Our hope is based on eternal life. Our hope is based upon the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. He didn't stay in that tomb; He came out. That living hope is defined.

Verse 4, "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Does that mean you go to heaven? Some read that verse and think, 'When we all get to heaven....' It doesn't say anything about going to heaven. We have an inheritance

that is incorruptible and undefiled. In other words, it doesn't deteriorate, rust, rot or decay. It is kept in a very safe place; it's kept in heaven. It is reserved in heaven. If it's in heaven and we are here, how are we going to get it? If the reward is in heaven and we are on earth, there are only one or two things that can happen. Either we have to go to heaven to get it or it has to come down here to us. So which is it?

Notice what Jesus says in the end of the book of Revelation.

Revelation 22:12, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." The last thing Jesus said in the book of Revelation was "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." So Christ is going to bring the reward with Him when He comes. We are not going to heaven to get it. The reward is being *reserved* in heaven until Christ comes. And when He comes, He is going to bring the reward with Him to give us in accordance with what we have done. It's very clear when we look at I Peter 1:4 and put it together with Revelation 22:12 that Christ will bring that reward with Him when He comes.

I Peter 1 describes this reward and the hope of which we are to have our hearts and minds set upon.

In verse 6, he tells us that even though, right now, we may be undergoing various trials and tests, we are to rejoice.

I Peter 1:7, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes..." Gold deteriorates and will wear away a molecule at a time. Maybe you've had a piece of gold jewelry or ring for many years; you will notice that gradually it begins to wear away. It will smooth down and will gradually wear away. Gold will perish. The reward that God has for us will not wear away and perish. The character that we are to build is not something that will wear away and perish.

He compares the trial of our faith to being like gold. For gold to have value and to be used, it has to be refined. Precious metal has to be refined because normally there are impurities that are mixed in with it that have to be purged out and gotten rid of. To separate the pure metal from the impurities present in the ore, the ancient metal workers or silversmiths had an interesting approach in refining precious metal. Using silver for an example, the method that they had of being able to determine when the silver was pure and purified to the point that they wanted it, they would melt the silver, the impurities (the dross)

would come to the top, and they would skim it. Their method for determining when they had it right was that the silversmith would look into the molten metal, and when it had gotten to the point that he could see his own reflection without distortion, he considered that all the impurities were removed. It was considered finished and completely refined. Today, that's not the way they do it. We have a little more sophisticated technology.

There's a lot of analogy to be drawn by the way that it was anciently done. The trials, tests and difficulties that we go through are compared to fire. It is through fiery trials that our character is purged. The dross and the impurities are purged away. And, interestingly enough, what is God doing? Isn't He, in effect, looking into us, looking into our character until He can see His own reflection without distortion? Isn't that the kind of character that we are to be developing? We are to be developing the mind of Christ and the character and nature of God. Just as the ancient silversmith, the worker with precious metals, looked into the molten substance to see if their reflection was there without distortion, so in effect, that is part of what we are going through as God is seeking to refine our character to reflect Him.

We find the tests, trials and difficulties that we go through mentioned here.

Verses 13-16, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance [we are not to go back and be the way we were when we didn't know any better]; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

God says we are not to fashion and shape ourselves according to the former lusts—to the cravings, desires and pulls of human nature. We're not to be like the world. We are to be holy in all aspects of our conduct and in every area of our life because God is holy and He wants us to reflect His values. He wants us to reflect His nature.

Verses 17-21, "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning here in fear [or reverence, as it actually means]; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things [our lives have not been purchased with

money]...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

Verse 24, we are reminded, "...All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away...." In other words, everything that appears so real and permanent to us is here today and gone tomorrow. It is just that passing and transitory.

I Peter 2:1, then we are told, going on from that, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking," Lay aside the evil motives, the resentment, the play-acting, the envy, the gossip and the backbiting. Lay aside all of these things.

Verse 2, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." The analogy God draws, in terms of the way we are to crave and desire God's Word, is in the same way that a little baby earnestly desires its mother's milk. Now, if there is ever an example of fervent desire, it's a little baby wanting to nurse. Any parent can remember. You can just see that little baby just bobbing its head just so anxious to get to it. It's like he has to have it and he has to have it right now. It is the exact description of this fervent desire. I have to have it and I've just got to have it right now. It's kind of funny to watch them sometime, as to how excited they can get at mealtime when they are ready to nurse.

God points that out and He says look how a little baby earnestly desires his mother's milk because he needs that in order for him to grow. He says, 'You need to take a lesson from that little baby. You need to have the same attitude when it comes to My Word. You need to be just as eager and excited about My Word, about the milk of the Word, as a newborn baby is after his own mother's milk.' That's quite an analogy because you think about that little baby and the way he is. We realize that God wants us to recapture some of that zeal, that eagerness, that anticipation for learning more of His way because that's our spiritual nourishment.

Verse 4, then he tells us, "Coming to Him as to a living stone...." He draws an analogy here that describes us.

Verse 5, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” We’re compared to living stones. There is a spiritual temple being built. Think a little bit. Do you remember the most unusual aspect of the construction of Solomon’s temple? If you had come there, it would have been the most unusual construction site you would have ever seen.

We are told back in I Kings 6:7 that there was not the sound of a hammer or of an axe at the temple site. Have you ever been to a construction site and you didn’t have all this clang, clang, bang, bang? All of the stones were cut at the quarry and they exactly fit. Everything was brought to the site exactly pre-cut. Three thousand years ago that must have been pretty primitive, but their measurements weren’t too primitive because they cut those stones to where they fit exactly. They didn’t need to get the sledgehammer out to it.

Have you ever wondered why God did that? What was the big deal? Was God primarily concerned about the sound of hammers at the temple site? The construction of the temple, just as the construction of the tabernacle and the furniture for it, was symbolic. God instructed Moses to do it exactly the way He showed him in the Mount. Why? Because it symbolized something! When the time came for Solomon to build the temple, God instructed him how to do it. God inspired him exactly how it was to be done because it was symbolic of certain things.

We are compared to living stones. God is building up a spiritual edifice, a spiritual temple that is going to completely come together at the time of the resurrection. The construction site, so to speak—when the spiritual temple comes together at the resurrection—is not when God’s going to get out the axe and hammer and start working on us. We’re going to fit exactly because right now we are at the quarrying stage. That’s why we get the knots on our head. He’s banging away right now. There’s a lot of banging and noise right now in our lives. The hammers, the axes and the saw, everything is at work right now trimming us to specification. When the time comes, we’re going to fit. We’re coming as living stones. Solomon’s temple was built with physical stones—just plain old Jerusalem sandstones—but God’s spiritual temple is being built, not with physical sandstone, but with living stones.

Verses 6-7, Jesus Christ Himself is compared to the chief cornerstone. In other words, the cornerstone is the one that is first laid and

everything else derives from there in terms of its measurement. Everything has to fit around the cornerstone. That’s the one that is the basis by which everything else is measured out. What it amounts to is that we all have to fit around Jesus Christ. We have to be cut and shaped where we will fit with Him. That’s quite an analogy describing how Christ is the chief cornerstone.

Verse 8, “and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense....” He has become a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to some.

Verse 9, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

Verse 11, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts....” We are not part of this society. We are strangers and pilgrims.

Verses 13-14, “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers....” We are to respect the laws of society, but we are not to be a part of it. We are not part and parcel of this society. We’re strangers and pilgrims. In other words, we are passing through. Because this is not our society, we are not part and parcel of this world’s military and political establishment. We are to submit ourselves to ordinances of man. We are to recognize and respect the laws of the land, but we are to realize that we are not a part of this society. There is that distinction. We are to try to set an example that people will notice in the way we live.

Verse 17, “Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.” We are to show proper love, respect and honor. We are to show proper esteem for others.

Verse 18, servants are enjoined to be subject to their masters, not simply to the ones that are good. There were, undoubtedly, those who were kind and considerate people. Just as today, some may work for a boss that is considerate and tries to be fair and equitable. There were servants then who had masters who sought to be just, masters who were equitable and reasonable men who tried to conduct themselves in an appropriate way. Peter says here to be subject to the harsh, not simply to the ones that do what they ought to do, because there are plenty of those that are the other way.

Verses 19-20, “For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.” When you get in trouble for something you did wrong and you take it in a decent attitude, God says, ‘Big deal! What does that count? You had it coming. You’re getting what you deserve. You are just simply receiving what you earned.’ If you haven’t done anything wrong and you take it in a proper attitude, this is commendable before God.

Verse 21, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” What were His steps?

Verse 22, He didn’t do any sin.

Verse 23, “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten...” Christ suffered. Sometimes, if we are going to live godly, we will have to suffer wrongfully. Will a Christian ever suffer wrongfully? Sure, sometimes. Christ did; Christ suffered wrongfully. He never suffered for what He did because He didn’t do anything wrong and He suffered for it. He left us an example that we should follow.

We realize that as a Christian there may be times when we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. God takes special note when someone is receiving something that they did not incur. The character that is established and the attitude that is exemplified by one who suffers wrongfully is something God takes note of.

Christ set the perfect example.

Verse 24, “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” We see that Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice. He gave His life for us. It is through His death that we have access to God. That access makes possible both our forgiveness of sin and our healing. That’s one of the benefits that we have as God’s people.

It’s one of the benefits that we have by having access to God. Christ certainly made that possible. The healing that He made possible certainly includes the whole gamut, whether you’re talking in spiritual or emotional terms and certainly in physical terms because that is one of the blessings and benefits that God has made available to His people. Christ gave Himself for us. He suffered in our stead, dying in our stead.

Through Him we have access to God, and through Him we have access to the benefits that God extends—the benefits of God’s mercy, His forgiveness and of God’s healing.

In verse 18, he talks about servants. Then he talks about Christians in general—those who suffer wrongfully.

I Peter 3:1-2, then he says, “Likewise [in the same way] you wives, be subject to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of the wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear [KJV, “respect”].” He addresses here the example that wives are to set.

Verses 3-5, “Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves...”

The word “adorned” is the word “*cosmos*” in the Greek. Interestingly enough, it is the same word that our modern English word “cosmetic” derives from. “*Cosmos*” in the Greek can be rendered several different ways, but in this context, it refers to “adorning.” The point that he is making is that it becomes a matter of priority. The world’s priority is on what goes on the outside. This is what life is all about to people in the world.

God says to His people (and specifically here addressing women), your life should not revolve around the outside but around the inside. The adornment that needs to be primarily focused upon is the inner person. The attitude, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is priceless in God’s sight. This is the ornament that the holy women of old utilized. It was an attitude that shined out. It is the inner person that manifests itself.

Obviously, this is not saying that you should never comb your hair and walk around in a sack all the time. I think we understand there are plenty of scriptures that show we should be properly neat and clean and groom ourselves appropriately. There’s nothing wrong with dressing nicely and tastefully and appropriate grooming. God is not saying you should never take a bath, never comb your hair and put on an old feed sack. That’s not what He is saying at all.

He's talking about a set of priorities. He's talking about what your life revolves around. Let's face it. In the world, in so many cases, the emphasis is on the external. All the things that can be put on the outside are considered what beauty is all about. What God thinks is beautiful is not something that derives from what you put on the outside. It derives from what you are on the inside. It's a matter of perspective and a matter of priority. This is an emphasis.

Verse 5, this is an example of the attitude of the holy women of old who trusted God and who were in subjection to their own husband. They had an attitude of respect.

Verse 6, "as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror." That is kind of an obscure statement; it means as long as you do well and do not let anxieties unnerve you. It requires faith. God's government is based on faith. To step out and to show the proper respect for God's government in the home requires faith that God will do His part and make it work.

Our daughters grow up to aspire to being counted by God as a daughter of Sarah. That is a very complimentary term. God looks upon Sarah as one of the most outstanding women of the Bible. She was a remarkable person. You read what Sarah went through and you read that Sarah had trials.

Abraham may have been the father of the faithful, but he was not perfect. You go back and read the story, and you find out that he wasn't perfect in some of the things that he did. And Sarah wasn't perfect either. But there was an example, an attitude, something that God saw that He greatly valued in those two individuals. They were called out as a unique and special team. Peter hearkens and utilizes this. I think there is a lot to be gained from focusing on the details of this instruction.

Then he begins to go into instructions for the husbands.

Verse 7, "Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel..." This term "weaker" could just as easily be rendered "fragile." The word literally means "more fragile." The point is a husband is told to be understanding of his wife, to give honor and respect to his wife. There is a proper chivalry, a proper attitude of manners. Give honor unto the wife as the one who is the more fragile, the more sensitive, perhaps the more easily hurt or crushed. There is generally a greater sensitivity

that women have. They tend to be more sensitive emotionally, a little more sensitive in their feelings. She is a little more fragile in that way. The husbands are told to realize that your wife tends to be more sensitive; show special honor and respect towards her.

There are many concepts of matters of chivalrous conduct that we should seek to practice in our own lives and certainly with our own wives. We want to teach our young boys to be polite, to treat the young ladies like ladies, to open and hold the door, to let the ladies go first and to show this kind of attitude of respect. It's proper and an appropriate kind of thing. Our society is so geared the other way that it takes a lot of instruction because that's not the message that they often get from society around.

Verse 8, "Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another..."

Verse 9, "not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling..." Have this attitude of being kind and giving a blessing.

Verse 7, he tells Christian husbands to deal with their wives in this way that your prayers be not hindered. Certainly, if we don't fulfill our responsibilities in the way that we handle our life and our families, it can certainly impact our prayer life and our relationship with God.

Verses 14-15, "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense [KJV, "an answer"] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

The context is suffering for righteousness' sake. When you're happy, even though you're suffering wrongfully, people can't figure that out. In that context, we're told to be ready to give an answer. If you really act like a Christian and live like a Christian, sooner or later somebody is going to ask you, 'What's with you? What's the source of this attitude, this peace that you have?' We're told, 'If it is the will of God to suffer, it is a whole lot better to suffer for well-doing than for evildoing.'

This is the example that Christ had.

Verses 18-21, "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few,

that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscious toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” It’s compared to baptism.

What is this talking about? There are those who go off to great things. The Catholic Church teaches when Jesus was crucified, He went to hell and preached down there to all the souls in hell. Of course, He couldn’t have been there for three days and three nights because they only had Him dead for a day and a half. If He was doing that, He surely pulled a dirty trick on the people on the cross because He told the thief that, ‘Today you are going to be with Me’ (Luke 23:43). If that was the case and He went to hell, the thief surely got a surprise and wound up in the other place. You can’t have it both ways, as they sometimes tend to do.

Let’s notice the context. Jesus Christ died in the flesh. As a physical human being, He died. Through the power of the Spirit, He was made alive. It is through the power of that same Spirit, by that same spiritual power, that He went to the spirits in prison—not to men in prison, not unto souls in prison—but to spirits in prison. God makes His angels spirits (Psalm 104:4), and here were spirits who were in prison. Here were spirits in restraint (“*tartaroo*” in the Greek). This is the only place where “*tartaroo*” is used; it refers to the place where these spirits (or angels) are under restraint. These spirits are fallen angels or demon spirits. Here was a time when Jesus exhorted certain demon spirits who were in prison or under restraint. God has placed certain restraints upon them. They were cast down to earth (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). They had been, at various times, very disobedient.

The specific occasion that is addressed is the time when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah. So the time when Jesus did this was not when He was dead. It was the time when Noah was building the ark. It was many, many centuries earlier at the time when the ark was being built. In effect, things had been stirred up to the point that God was going to have to intervene and wipe out humanity from the face of the earth. He was wiping out life on the planet, and He was going to start over.

Evidently, at some point during the preparation of the ark prior to the flood, Jesus Christ addressed the demon spirits and exhorted and warned them. Their final fate and punishment has not yet been assigned to each of them because we

are told in I Corinthians 6 that we will judge the angels. We will have a part in judging them and giving a final sentence. Christ evidently exhorted them that they had better consider the consequences of what they were doing. He exhorted them that He was going to step in and put a stop to what they were doing. The magnitude of what they were doing was simply making it worse and harder on them. There is an exhortation, warning, and admonition to them at that time that their final judgment and sentencing had not yet been passed. They were simply getting themselves in deeper and deeper by the magnitude of some of what they were doing. He brings this in at this point.

I Peter 4:1, “Therefore, since Christ, suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” Part of the purpose of going through trials and tests is that it enables us to grow. It helps us to overcome, to put sin behind us. It helps us to really get our priorities straight. It helps us to see things in proper perspective.

Verse 4, the world may think it strange that we don’t do the things that we used to do. They should notice a difference.

Verse 5, we are all going to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living (KJV “quick”) and the dead. The term “quick” simply means “those who are alive.” It doesn’t mean if you’re slow you won’t be judged. “Quick” means “those who are living”; it simply means that everybody is going to get judged. If you’re dead, you will be raised up and will be judged. If you’re still alive, then you’ll be judged, too. You’re either dead or alive. There’s not much way you can be in between—so that takes care of everybody.

Verse 6, “For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” There are those who take that scripture and think they should preach to the dead. There are some who believe in being baptized for all their dead relatives. They think they can get people into heaven if they get baptized for them. Does this mean you should go down to the graveyard and preach to the dead? That wouldn’t do much good.

Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, “the dead know nothing.” So, it’s not going to do any good to preach to them.

What does this mean, “the gospel preached to the dead”? Notice what it says. “For this reason the

gospel was [past tense] preached also to them that are dead [present tense].” The verb tense makes it plain the gospel was preached (past tense) to those who are dead (present tense). Christ is going to come back and He’s going to judge everybody—both those who are still living and those who have already died. So the fact that some have already died doesn’t mean the gospel was preached to them in vain. The gospel was preached, past tense, to those who are now dead. Christ is going to judge us all, whether we have already died or whether we are still alive. Obviously, the gospel was preached to those who are now dead—but when they were alive. It was preached, past tense, back when they were living. They are now dead, but that’s okay because Christ is going to return. They will be made alive, and judgment will be there.

Verse 8, we are admonished to have fervent love among ourselves. Love covers a multitude of sin.

Verses 12-13, “...don’t think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” When we are partakers of Christ’s suffering, we can rejoice because when His glory is revealed, we will be partakers of that, too. We should not be shocked or surprised when trials and tests come.

Verse 17, “For the time has come [right now] for judgment to begin at the house of God....” Judgment for us, for God’s people, for God’s Church, is right now. This is our time of judgment.

I Peter 5:1-4, Peter ends up by admonishing the ministry to feed the flock that is among them, to set an example and to realize that Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd, will appear and demand an accounting.

Verse 5, “...‘God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

Verse 6, we are to humble ourselves under His hand and He will exalt us.

Verses 7-8, “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant....”

Verse 13, Peter closes by mentioning that he is writing from Babylon; this was his headquarters at this time.

In II Peter, Peter addresses the same basic group. II Peter 1:4, “by which has been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature....”

Then he goes through and enumerates seven characteristics: virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. These are to be added to faith.

Verse 9, he tells us that if we lack these things, we’re blind.

Verse 10, he goes on to tell us that if we do these things, we shall never stumble.

Verses 4-11, Peter tells us the basis, “by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

He gives us a sure-fire means to guarantee that we will never “fall by the wayside.” He tells us how to go about being productive and growing spiritually. There is a tremendous amount that is packed into these verses. These verses are certainly a way of ensuring that we will grow in grace and in knowledge (II Peter 3:18). We will not “fall by the wayside” if we are putting these things into practice.

Verse 12, “Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them, and are established in the present truth.” He said, ‘I want to continually remind you of these things. I know you’ve heard it, but I want to always remind you.’

Verses 13-14, “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent [as long as I am still living], to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent....” In other words, ‘I am going to die.’ Peter said, ‘As long as I am alive and here in the flesh, I think it’s important that I stir you up and remind you of these things. I realize that I’m not going to be around a whole lot longer.’

Verse 15, “Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things

after my decease [after I am dead]. “ Clearly this is a reference to a permanent canon of Scripture that Peter was responsible for bringing about. This would ensure that the things he had reminded and exhorted the brethren might be remembered after he was dead and gone.

In verse 16, you notice there is a change from first person singular to first person plural. In verses 12, 13, 14 and 15, he said “I”—first person singular. He says, “I will not be negligent...I think it is right...I must put off my tent...I will be careful...”

Verses 16-19, notice the switch, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. We also have the prophetic word made more sure [KJV, “a more sure word of prophecy”]...”

Sometimes the word “we” can get read over, but it’s important to note because it points out something very specific. Who is the “we”? Clearly it is those who were with Jesus in the holy mountain who heard the voice from God that said, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” Who was that? You go back to Matthew 17 and it is clearly defined.

Matthew 17:1-2, “Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, brought them into a high mountain...and was transfigured there before them....”

Verse 5, “...a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly there was a voice out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear you Him.’” Who heard that? Peter, James and John were the ones with Jesus in the holy mount.

James the brother of John had been martyred. He was the first of the apostles martyred. We have reference to it in Acts 12, which is dated about 44 A.D. James the brother of John was killed with a sword (Acts 12:2). James the brother of John was the first one of the twelve that was martyred.

James was long dead, and that meant that Peter and John were the only two still living. There had only been three originally; one was dead, so that meant Peter and John were the only individuals living who had been with Jesus on the mountain.

They had seen Him transfigured and heard the voice from heaven that announced, “This is My beloved Son.” Therefore, the ones who had the sure word of prophecy were Peter and John.

II Peter 1:19, “We also have the prophetic word made more sure [KJV, “a more sure word of prophecy”]...”

Verse 16, ‘We have not come off and followed cunningly devised fables. We saw; we were there. We [Peter and John] have the sure word of prophecy.’ They were the ones that God utilized to give us the New Testament. They were set aside through this unique experience. They were imparted with what Peter terms here as the sure word of prophecy. They were the ones that God utilized to designate what would be New Testament Scripture.

Peter singles this out, as he tells them, ‘I am going to die. I’ve been reminding you of these things, and I want to make sure that after I’m gone, you will continue to be reminded. We [John and I] have the sure word of prophecy. So you take heed to what we say as opposed to what others may say.’

Peter then begins to warn them.

II Peter 2:1, “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly bring in destructive heresies....”

This was specific reference to the problems that came into the first-century Church. It describes what resulted in bringing together and what became the great false church.

We have already commented on II Peter 1:15 that Peter was putting together this canon of Scripture so that after he was dead, there would be a permanent record that would be available to continually remind them.

Then in chapter 2, Peter begins to point out these false prophets. He brings out the fact that God will deal with everyone in His time. God knows those that are His.

Verse 4, He dealt with the angels who sinned. Verse 5, He dealt with the world at the time of Noah.

Verse 6, He dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 7, He delivered Lot and then dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah. God knows who’s who.

Verse 15, God described those who followed the way of Baalam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Baalam was willing to preach anything for a price.

Verse 18, it described individuals speaking great swelling words of vanity, who seek to entice

those that have come into the group and to lure them back.

We are told in verses 20-21 that it is better never to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and turned away from it. You're better to have never had your opportunity than to have had it and "blown" it. That's what he is saying, which evidently was the case in some of these.

II Peter 3:1-2, "Beloved, I now write to you, this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

Here Peter is equating the New Testament with the Old Testament in terms of authority. He said, 'I want you to remember the Bible and what it says in the Bible. I want you to remember what was spoken before by the holy prophets [the Old Testament] and the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord.' Peter is equating the Commandments that the apostles gave with the writings of the prophets of the Old Testament.

He is explaining this because at the time Peter is writing (up until that point), when you said "Bible" or when you talked about "Scripture," you were talking about what we think of as the Old Testament. That had been the Bible—the Scriptures—for many, many years. That had been the Bible, and these other things had been letters. There had been a letter from Paul or a letter from Peter, a letter from this one or that one. This is a clear designation of which books were official, and he is putting them on the same par with the prophets of old. He is saying that the writings of the apostles and the writings of the prophets of old are to be mutually adhered to.

Verses 3-4, he then says, "knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lust, and saying, 'where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers have gone asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.'" There will come those in the last days who follow their own lusts and desires and who say, 'Where is the promise of His coming? Things just go on the way they always have.'

Verses 5-7, he then says, 'they are willingly ignorant of the fact that God has intervened in the past. They ignore the evidence of the flood. They ignore that God has stepped into history and judged the world in times past, and He will do so again.'

Verses 8-9, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as 1,000 years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...." God has not forgotten what He said. He has a time plan; a day is representative of 1,000 years. God is going to do what He says He is going to do.

Verse 13, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." We are looking for something that is to come.

Verse 15, then he ends up by reminding them of what Paul had written. All the things Paul wrote had been gathered together. He reminds them that Paul wrote some things that are difficult to be understood. They can be taken out of context and misunderstood.

Verse 16, "as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist [KJV, "wrest"] to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." They take it out of context. That's what it means to wrest; it means "to pry loose." If you wrest something loose, that means you are prying it loose. The way people misunderstand Paul is by taking what he said out of context, prying it loose from the overall context in which it's written. They take it out and say Paul did away with the law—which he didn't.

But he wrote some things that are not easily understood unless you really carefully examine the context in which he says them. Peter addresses that and equates what Paul wrote with all the other scriptures.

Why did he write II Peter? He summarizes his purpose of writing.

II Peter 3:1-2, "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle...[Those of you in Spokesman Club, this is called SPS—Specific Purpose Statement]...(in both [both letters I wrote] of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder) [of trying to remind you of something], that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior."

In other words, he wanted to stir them up to study the Bible—the Old Testament, which they already had and the New Testament, which God was using Peter to compile. He wanted to stir them up, to continue to go back over the Bible, to pay heed to it, to be reminded of what God was doing and of God's plan and purpose.

I hope that from this survey, this overview, we can perhaps have a little more insight into some of the things that God revealed through Peter. There is a lot that is packed in here.

I am passing out questions on I, II, III John and Jude. That sounds like a lot of books when you “rattle them off,” but when you look at the number of pages involved, it is very short. Since II, III John and Jude each consist of one short chapter, I don’t think that will be too lengthy a set of Scriptures to study between now and next time. We will focus in on these very important books. You can’t always equate length with importance. A lot can be packed into a short space.

When we conclude the epistles of John and Jude, we will have completed this short series on the General Epistles and we will be prepared to launch another Bible study series. I think, at this time, we will get into the Major Prophets. There is so much going on and happening in the world that I think that it would do us well to go back and take note of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. We will find that today’s and tomorrow’s headlines are already in the Bible.

With that we will conclude.