

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER (Lesson 13) - Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

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Concerning the studying

I **recommend** you to read through the respective book in the bible at first. Our manual is the bible. And then to go through one or two pages of the material every day, which implies to also look up and read the given bible scriptures to become thoroughly acquainted with the subject. Another suggestion would be to use this material as one's regular devotion.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end of the seminar**, you need to answer the **test questions** at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address. And now I wish you lots of joy and spiritual profit during your bible study.

Pastor Joh. W. Matutis

MISCELLANEOUS

Just like the Epistles of James and John this Epistle of Peter was written with a special emphasis on **tempters and temptation**. The temptors used to make many promises to the believers about „**liberty and freedom**“ and therewith lead them astray into sin, excess and the like. The denied the coming of the Lord or even questioned it.

The 2nd Epistle of Peter is similar to the Epistle of James. The author of the letter wants to explain to the believers what true Christianity is. Therefore it is a helpful letter of **comfort and encouragement** to Christians suffering persecution and very different from the harsh and agitated defence of the dangerous tempters and seducers which entered the churches.

The **content of the letter** reveals the pastoral sense of responsibility of a great and famous shepherd of souls.

If the Epistle **of James and Peter are so similar**, then perhaps Peter and James were brought up under the same care and upset about the spiritual danger of false teachings in the apostolic churches. From the content they are expressing the same, without having talked about it. But a matter is always confirmed by two or three witnesses (Mat. 18,16 / 2. Cor. 13,1 / 1. Tim. 5,19).

AUTHOR

He introduces himself as „Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ“ (2. Petr. 1,1). Several times he mentions that he knew Jesus and was an eye-witness of His life. He counts himself among the few who were there during the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain (2. Petr. 1,16 – 18).

It is also the only letter where the **transfiguration of Jesus** is mentioned. When the master Jesus was **transfigured** before their eyes they caught a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. They were allowed to see what we can expect one day. They saw the eternal kingdom of God without having to taste death (comp. Mk. 9,1... and he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”) **Jesus gave them a new perspective** (comp. Lk. 9,51 / Hebr. 12,1 – 3). And at the same time it is an argument against the gnostics (2. Petr. 2,13). Those were false teachers who are **carnally minded**.

Peter gives the readers authentic material to work with. When he departs they will be able to remember all of those things and call them to mind over and over again. This is the **assignment of the preachers** today in the churches: to recall the message of the apostles anew. The author calls apostle **Paul his brother** (2. Petr. 3,15). In 2. Pet. 1,14 where he points to his coming end he remembers Joh. 21,18.

Between the lines of this letter we can make out a different author than of the 1st epistle. Peter must have dictated the letter to somebody else. The language and style are different from the first, even though it is the same author.

We know that **Peter did not write the letters himself**. Those are rather notes, a dictate or a copy in the form of **sermon notes** or a faith seminar protocol. It recalls exhortations which the apostle Peter gave to the church. The momentum and inspiration of this letter came from Peter but not more than that. It is definitely another writer but the same author. The same way the Epistle to the **Romans** and the **Ephesians** were written by different people but authored by Paul.

The **excellent Greek** just like in 1st Peter can be explained if Peter assigned one of his Greek co-workers to write the final letter (1. Pet. 5, 12).

The **diversity of style, etc. is logical**. It addresses different groups of people who also have different problems. And of course you would have to address different topics. The author also refers to a **first letter** which he wrote before (3, 1) which obviously refers to the 1st Epistle of Peter. Because of many indications from the content of the text we can approve the authenticity of this epistle and confirm Peter as the author in spite of a lack of historical evidence.

„**Peter**“ refers to himself by his original name „**Simon**“ in his first Epistle. Therefore we know that this letter was **primarily addressing the Jews**. **Peter** is the name that Jesus gave him which is also known in its Aramaic form „**Cephas**“ gebraucht worden war.

He characterises his relationship to Jesus in two ways. **With all of his heart he is a slave of Jesus**, the holy Messiah of Israel. He wants to suffer and minister as one who totally belongs to Jesus. He has the earnest intention to live in total dependence on Him and minister by faithful obedience.

He even calls himself a „**slave of Jesus Christ**“. A real **slave** according to ancient society order had lost any right to himself by force and totally belonged to **his master**: they could not do anything of themselves and always had to follow the instructions of the lord under whose yoke they were. In the same way the rock of faith Peter wanted to serve "**his Lord Jesus**", the Christ of God, but on the basis of his own free will. A free will decision that is based on deep gratitude that He had purchased him by the price of His blood, He had given His life for us and therefore redeemed us from sin, guilt and death. His ministry for Jesus is determined by his calling.

RECIPIENTS

The recipients are the same as in the first letter according to text evidence in 2. Pet. 1,1 and 3,1. That means the believers of all **churches in Asia Minor**. The used form of greeting calls them such people who have received the same precious faith based on the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The **recipients** were characterised by their **faith** and not by their **place of residence**. They must also have been the recipients of the first epistle which was also **some kind of a circular letter** that was probably also sent to other churches that did not necessarily have to be within the area of Asia Minor. But in this letter there is also mentioned **another circle** of churches than in 1st Peter. In the contrary of the first epistle the area of residence is not precisely mentioned.

The exact **reason** why Peter wrote this letter is not quite clear. But since he says it is his **second letter** to them (comp. 2. Petr. 3,1) it must have been addressed to the same community that is addressed in 1. Pet. 1,1.

The **apostolic letters** were nobody's private possession **but a common good** and it was read publicly in the church and heard by the whole congregation. .

It is remarkable that in the NT there are not many remarks about "**conversion**" and "**converted**". "**To receive the faith**" resp. "**becoming a believer**" is the spiritual process that the NT puts special emphasis on.

„**Faith**“- the bible refers to the total **devoted trust** in one God of heaven and earth which is revealed in His holy word, His saving works and eventually the person Jesus Christ. Such a trust cannot be created or formed by **ourselves** just like none of the works God does needed our help. The inner condition of trust of the heart is received in a deep spiritual encounter with the living God, which can be experienced through the hearing of the word of God (Rom. 10,14 – 18) which are preached by the blessed and authorised messengers of God.

What we receive through the holy spirit **during the proclamation** is the **same faith** that the apostles received. Therefore we are in no way inferior to them.

It is an „**equal faith**“ that we now have even though we never encountered Jesus according to the flesh just like Thomas for example (Joh. 20,29) or Peter and some other lucky people (1. Pet. 1,7 – 9).

It is the accordance as in music, after which all other instruments of the orchestra are tuned in order to accomplish harmony. This is the great secret of Christian unity.

This „**equality**“ goes so far that we can see in 2nd Peter that God does not make a difference when He gives away His precious gifts of grace to anybody who receives Jesus with thanksgiving and is thereafter justified by God and God starts the „**process of regeneration**“ in him (also Rom. 1,17; 5,1 - 2; 3,21 - 26; 8,31).

COMPOSITION

A place of composition is not mentioned. According to statements in 2nd Pet. 1,13 - 15 the authors expected a soon farewell. According to reliable sources Peter died AD 67 the death of a martyr and therefore we can assume that the letter was written in his time of captivity which would be in the year AD 66 or 67 in Rome. About the **time of composition** we only find out in the letter that it was during the best age of the apostles before the time of persecution of the Christians by Emperor Nero started.

AUTHENTICITY

The special characteristic of the letter is the defense against false teachers, **because they denied the return of Jesus** since it seemed to be delayed. This negative attitude was typical for a later epoch and does not fall into the time of the first Christians at Jerusalem. Paul also had to deal with such false doctrines that denied the 2nd Coming of Christ and wrote about it in 2nd Epistle to the Thessalonians (AD 53 - 54).

In the first letter the return of Jesus Christ is mentioned like an event that seems to be at hand; in the second letter, however, this hope is replaced by sober realisation.

This epistle is also more than **another version of the Epistle of James**. A man like the apostle Peter did not have to copy another apostle. He himself was an authentic original and experienced and bore more than enough with Jesus on earth. Numerous **inner evidence** such as arguments of the letter, show that the expected coming of Christ is not a matter of knowledge but also a vivid hope (2. Pet. 3, 9 – 14).

The relation **to the Epistle of James** is not unusual. It is possible that Peter knew this letter very well. When James wrote a letter he came up with the same thoughts which were the subject of their conversation and as Peter later went through the same questions again he might have used the epistle of James as a foundation and then write about it in his own words.

Such a co-labouring of **two apostles** who both visited the same church is not only possible but also very probable. Jesus always sent out His disciples by two. Thus, besides other advantages, they could always testify by at least **two witnesses**.

Peter and James complemented their testimonies and confirmed it like also **Peter and Paul**. The apostle only had a united testimony. They preached only one eternal holy and true Lord of heaven and earth and they all agreed with each other on those matters.

In addition we also find some indications and remarks of 2nd Peter in the texts of the church fathers **Clemens and Hermas**. Further traces can be found with **Theophilus of Antioch** and **Firmilian of Caesarea**. The educated and conscientious **Origenes** referred to „two letters of Peter“ and even quoted them several times adding: „... like the scripture says.“

Eusebius counts the Epistles of Peter among the „Catholic epistles“, however he is very careful about that. In his catalogue Hieronymus also mentioned 2nd Peter and therewith confirmed its authenticity. In the Council of Laodicea the letter was commonly acknowledged and adopted to the canonical books.

PURPOSE AND GOAL

The urgency of the second letter was due to the massive occurrence of false teachings who used the Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful life. The good news about the true return of Christ was called deception (2. Pet. 3, 3 – 4) and even mocked as false hope (2. Pet. 3, 9 – 10).

The important goal of Peter was to stop the audacious false teachers and keep them from teaching those lies and at the same time also draw the Christian's attention to the fact that the Second Coming of Christ is a divine event of great and serious importance.

The true **reason** why Peter and also James had to write is clearly stated in both of their letters. The false teachers and tempter had brought division into the Christian church of faith in a way that had very destructive consequences and influence upon the single churches. But in truth they delivered „another gospel“ (such as in Corinth - 1. Cor. 5,6). The word resp. the meaning of **false teaching** or heresy (Greek = *hairesis*) comes from „choice / choose, conception, school, heresy“. **False teaching is like a bee gum**. You „swarm“ around certain „**personalities**“. But the center of their message is not Jesus as redemptive Saviour of the bound souls, but conscious false teachings in order to lead the lost souls away from the way of salvation, which is very important for anybody.

The term „**gnosis**“ is Greek and means „**insight**“. It is a common term for all religious movements which relate redemption and deliverance of a man to the knowledge of the substance, origin and purpose of the world, the life of a man and the knowledge of certain religious things. Gnosticism and gnosis is understood as a movement of Judaism. It implies Hellenism and Christianity from 100 BC until AD400 (peak about AD200) where all used to find knowledge of God with the goal of transfiguration of the spiritual man (Pneumatics) and often ecstatic unification with the Godhead.

Part of the gnostic doctrines were theological dualism between creation and redemption, the emanation theory of the flow of the divine to the world, perceptions of redemption that claim the deliverance of the Christian from the material world and proclaim the return to the original home, as well as the doctrine about the physical effect of the sacraments as a means of healing for immortality. In Christian gnosis the faith is taken out of its historical context, the incarnation of Christ is denied and obedience by faith limited. **Followers of this ideological movement are called „gnostics“**, and corresponding opinions are called gnostic. The original Christianity strongly had to fight **Judaism**“ and the mentioned „**Gnosis**“. The apostle considered the overly intellectual gnosis as **dangerous**. Therefore they fought it with determination and severity.

CONTENT AND DIVISION

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Keyword: **Knowledge**

Key verse: „*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence*“ (2. Pet. 1,3).

MISCELLANEOUS

The true knowledge of God – since the recipients of the letter were threatened to be tempted by the bad doctrines of the false teachers we understand that the apostle Peter put such an emphasis on the necessity of having the full knowledge of Him who called them.

Foundations of our knowledge of God

The precious promises.	Ch. 1, 3 - 4
The testimony of the prophets.	Ch. 1, 19 - 20
The testimony of the Holy Spirit.	Ch. 1, 20 - 21

Means to obtain this knowledge

Faith.	Ch. 1, 5
Steady growth.	Ch. 3, 18

Fruits of knowledge

Increase of grace and peace.	Ch. 1, 2
Divine strength for godly change.	Ch. 1, 3
Empowerment to forsake this world.	Ch. 2, 20
Illumination of the person Jesus Christ.	Ch. 1, 8; 2, 20
Clarity about the way of righteousness.	Ch. 2, 21

The false teachers

Their false doctrine

Rejection of the redemptive death of Jesus.	Ch. 2, 1
Denial of the return of Jesus.	Ch. 3, 4
Introduction of sects.	Ch. 2, 1

Their characteristics

Lies and greed. .	Ch. 2, 3
Perversity and unrighteousness.	Ch. 2, 10 - 13
Immorality and greed.	Ch. 2, 14 - 16
Ambition and malice.	Ch. 2, 17 - 19
Backsliding and falling from faith.	Ch. 2, 20 - 22

Their perversive influence

Many fall into their traps.	Ch. 2, 2a
The testimony of truth is mocked.	Ch. 2, 2b

Their deserved punishment

Is inevitable.	Ch. 2, 3b
Is necessary like...	
...judgment over the angels,	Ch. 2, 4
...the flood over the godless people,	Ch. 2, 5
...the fire over Sodom and Gomorrha.	Ch. 2, 6
Is terrible.	Ch. 2, 9

DETAILED REFLECTION

Chapter 1

The apostle calls and regards **his brothers** as such who received the same precious faith like he did: which is by God's faithfulness concerning the promises He made to the forefathers. This is a good explanation / image of the word „righteousness“. The faithfulness of the God of Israel had given to His chosen people the Christian faith – which is Christianity. This faith was so precious for them. Faith is the part where we can partake in the things that God gave us, that He revealed in Christianity as the truth while some promised things are yet to come. Peter greets them in the usual way using the terms „**grace and peace**“ adding: „in the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.“(Vers 2).

The knowledge of God and Jesus is the absolute center and pillar of true faith. The divine knowledge and acknowledgement of Jesus makes the difference between faith and dreams of the tempters.

With this internal knowledge of God there is a living power connected, a divine source of life in the measure according to our faith. This divine, creating and sustaining source gave us **everything** that we need for a free, self-conscious life and blessedness. Through manifested knowledge that we have from Him this divine power can be applied to all things and works for all things that are a part of righteous life and deep blessedness. It is the **„knowledge of Him“** who called us in glory and virtue“. Peter called himself a slave of Jesus Christ: Jesus is his Master.

In the first letter he just calls himself **„Peter“**. In the 2nd letter he reveals that he has not forgotten who he was and what Jesus Christ made of him. He reminds us how his way of transformation into the image of Christ began. Peter is both: „slave“ servant and apostle of Jesus Christ (comp. Rom. 1 and Titus. 1).

(**2. Pet. 1,1 – 3**) The letter starts with a **„prayer request“** concerning an increase of grace and peace in the knowledge of God. **Greetings** are not without meaning. They hold together even a whole nation, a family or a church. When I pronounce greeting I acknowledge that there is somebody. **The greeting** is among other things an expression of friendliness, attention and appreciation.

„May grace and peace abound among us by the knowledge of God and Jesus...“ - With this formulation Peter stole the thunder of the „gnostics“ right away.

The author of the letter views all of the readers **as people who were given the precious faith of God**. Thus he points to God and grace, the source of all knowledge and insight. Gnostics considered „faith“ a low level of relationship with God and only had humiliating terms for the „people of faith“. They felt way superior because of their **„knowledge“** (gnosis).

Now Peter creates a connection between **„faith and knowledge“**. Because we love God more and more and also get to know Him more and more, also His grace and peace will flow more abundantly. Because **the more I know HIM**, acknowledge Him and love Him, the more I understand the greatness and grace that I have through Jesus Christ.

Indeed **only the relationship with God that was ignited by faith** enables a man to recognize Jesus and His deep meaning. All other things are just mere thoughts and theories that do not even get close to the true essence of God's being.

Peter is saying to the readers: **„You believe, therefore you know Him!...“** Actually you could also say: „You believe, therefore you also understand, you believe therefore you have it, you believe and therefore you are, etc. Such strong arguments could not be answered with arguments against it by the gnostics.

This letter gave two important keys to the believers - **„grace and peace“**. They were supposed to use this to understand, grasp God and continue to grow in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ (2. Pet. 3,18). It is his concern that they all stand firm in their faith (2. Pet. 1,10,12,19) without compromise. The more their faith is strengthened the better.

Peter wrote especially to those who are not yet stable and are still very vulnerable in their faith. Therewith he **fulfills the assignment of Christ to strengthen the brethren**“ (Luk. 22,32 / 1. Pet. 5,8 – 9) and he also shepherds the beloved sheep of the shepherd Jesus with much diligence (Joh. 21). He protects the sheep of threatening dangers (2. Pet. 2,1), false shepherds who are actually no shepherds at all, and before „unsoberness“ (1. Pet. 5,8 – 9) by challenging us to watchfulness. Everything we need to live a righteous life was given to us through Him who called us. When he know the One who called us (1. Thes. 5,24) we have everything we actually need (Col. 2,10 / Rom. 8,32).

Reflections about: **„ Knowledge „**

The knowledge of God. Since the addressed believers of this important letter were endangered to be lead astray by the perverted doctrines of the false teachers, we can get a clue why the apostle Peter is emphasizing the necessity of full knowledge of the „One who called us“ (1, 3) with such severity.

Peter starts his letter with the subject of precious faith (2. Petr. 1,1).

Faith is precious in the view of a precious one, Jesus. He is the beginner and finisher of faith (Hebr. 12, 2).

Who can measure the endless measure and eternal sovereignty of the heavenly Lord, who is the central subject of our deepest trust? He is higher than all the heavens and far sovereign over all of His wonderful and faithful angels. (Hebr. 1, 6, 11 / Is. 6, 2).

Jesus is called the Son of the Most High (Luk. 1, 32). He is God Himself revealed in the flesh of man (1. Tim. 3,16), the **Immanuel** – God is with us (Is. 7,14). Jesus, is the creator and sustainer of all things, the reflection of God's glory (Hebr. 1, 2, 3 / Col. 1, 16). We do not even have the words to describe Him, whom Peter calls the most precious (1. Petr. 2, 6). In Him, the precious one who cannot lie, we put all our faith (Joh. 1, 6 / Hebr. 6,18). Jesus, whom we faithfully trust is also the terror of Satan and His demonic angelic armies. We may see Moses at the feet of the prophets, but we are called to eventually believe only in the holy name of the Son of God. We should freely hear, for our own benefit what the Father says and advises us to do (Matth.17,5).

Faith is infinitely precious in that what he testifies. In the One we believe in all of the precious promises were given to us. Our flaming love for Jesus Christ is resting in the divien promises of the invisible as if we could see Him (2. Cor. 1, 20). Real faith counts on the words of the Lord „Whatever you ask my Father in His name He will give it to you“ (Joh. 14,13). The heavenly Father rejoices over every beloved child that draws near to Him with faith and humility.

True faith is more precious and more secure than all silver and gold of the earth. One single promise of Him is more precious than all the treasure of this world (Ps. 73, 25).

All of Hebrews 11 in the bible testifies what they accomplished by faith.

Faith is precious in that what it gives to the believer. Truly, endlessly much is given to us through the ability of faith.

- By faith we were saved - (Eph. 2, 8, 9).
- By faith we received forgiveness - (Apg. 10, 43).
- By faith we are justified before God - (Röm. 3, 28; 5,1).

- By faith we become children of God - (Joh. 1,12).
- By faith we are sanctified - (Joh. 17,17).
- By faith we are sustained - (1. Petr. 1, 5).
- By faith we have eternal life - (Joh. 3, 15, 16).
- By faith we have access to God - (Eph. 3,12).
- Gy faith we enter inner rest - (Hebr. 4, 3, 11).

Faith is precious which can be seen in countless evidences. We would have to write endless pages if we wanted to count all the evidences of the precious works of faith:

- Those who were bit by a snake proved **„saving“** faith (Joh. 3, 14 -16).
- Caleb had **„courageous“** faith and accomplished an inheritance whereas the unbelieving died in the desert (Numb. 13).
- Abraham had **„unshakeable“** faith in the promises. He believed that the one who gave him the promises would be faithful (Rom. 4, 17 – 22).
- The **„victorious“** faith redeemed the power of fire (Hebr. 11, 34).
- Daniel had **„heroic“** faith when he went to the lion's den (Dan. 6),etc.

(2. Petr. 1,2 – 3) Now the fruits of knowledge have to be sustained and increased.

The apostles carried their faith into all the world and sowed this precious seed everywhere. The living, powerful seed of the gospel is blossoming. With love and devotion they planted and watered new seeds piece by piece. God gave them everything they needed through the rebirth of the spirit by grace. The first step as decisive beginning was made but then they had to let the planted seed grow by itself and develop into a tree. But they have to assert themselves against all the parasites which sow false teachings like tares.

(2. Petr. 1,3) Divine power for divine transformation is given to every believer.

Like every grain carries a seed after its kind and another mysterious, life-giving substance of power is already within, also the rebirthed spiritual soul already carries all **divine spiritual „seeds of life“** which God already placed on the inside of thim. Now also the outward environment including other necessary factors have to be right and aligned with it so that the growth can begin.

(2. Petr. 1,3) Peter begins the epistle with very serious and comprehensive exhortations.

Our Christian life and Christian fellowship does not happen just by itself, but our own conscious and determined effort is required (Vers 10).

Peter assumes God's free and generous **giving** which expresses His goodness, grace and eternal goodwill. The Lord is the only giver and source of all that is and what we need. Nobody has deserved His holy grace and nobody can ever earn it by anything he does because the grace of God is totally free and granted without cost at anytime by our merciful Father.

Just like Paul uses the Greek word „divine“, a religious word in his **Areopag speech** in Athens (Acts 17,29), Peter also uses this term. He speaks the language of his readers so that they could also understand him and what he is trying to say. When God **gives to us**, then we are rich in mercy and grace, which is much more than hypocrisy and piety. When we live by grace then we live a life that God originally planned for us.

„**Piety**“ is a typical Hellenistic word. The God-pleasing piety does not just come out of the blue, like material possession. We personally have to receive and obtain it by faith. Peter chooses the word **„knowledge“**, because we can only keep things in our heart if we believe **and** understand. Therefore Peter emphasises both things: **faith and knowledge** which must go hand in hand to produce spiritual growth.

Also for the believer „knowledge“ is very important. False knowledge and incorrect knowledge lead astray and **to false speculations** of all kind.

From the moment when a person consciously starts to believe in God and starts to obey Him, God will show Him more and more of His glory and power and will also let Him partake by **sharing with Him the divine nature.**

We go from knowledge to knowledge step by step (1.Cor. 1,5 / 2. Cor. 8,7 / Eph. 3,19 / Col. 1,9,10). It is almost as if we would climb a ladder. On this **stairway** to heaven every step brings forth another virtuous attitude after the other (Phil. 4,8). The true knowledge of the inside of the soul is more than wisdom by experience, it is a pure and good fruit of new life by faith, by the spirit and the truth which is generally aiming at the fulfillment of the God-given commandments.

The knowledge that results **from faith experiences** comes to **practical application** in the life of a Christian and brings order and system according to God into his old life which is about to go through a process of regeneration.

And that is more than just some kind of religious tendency or disposition that we have to strive for by force. The inner experience which comes by living faith alone **„strengthens the believer“** so that the spiritual man can live by his divine nature and the laws thereof (Ez. 11,19). For by nature we are all fallen from grace and hypnotized by sin through disobedience, stubbornness and pride (Rom. 7,14 – 15). The **term virtue** is a little old-fashioned and moral, but the term **„diligence“** can be used very well in the sense of the interpretation of this scripture so that the reader can acknowledge that verse 3 and 5 are indeed the same word (also 1. Petr. 2,9). Especially here in 2nd Peter we find typical terms and words of Hellenistic and religious background which are not used in the rest of the bible. The author willfully uses **„gnostic terminologies“**, to encourage active controversy with the dangerous „gnostics“ so that they can enter their rhetorical argumentations with boldness. A God-fearing person does not have to fear the lies of Satan.

The foundation of our knowledge of God.

(2. Petr. 1,3 – 4) God gave us the greatest promises and preconditions to become **„partakers“** of the all-embracing divine nature. God has a great and honorable plan with all those who belong to Him and follow Him voluntarily. He wants to let them share in His divine being freely and confidentially. His true children are supposed to accomplish perfect likeness of Christ in all areas of life (Rom. 8,29ff.). This is our high calling. Christ came in order to restore the divine image that was strongly represented by Adam in the beginning but was lost in the fall of men. The perfect character that Christ represented was a clear revelation of who we are supposed to be in Him, resp. what we shall become in Him (1. Joh. 3,1 – 2). After our heavenly regeneration by the grace of God and our active part and own contribution to conversion and regeneration we can eventually escape this world that only brings death. This **escape does not mean alienation of this world** by exalting ourselves over them or a physical absence from the people who are in this world, but it rather refers to an inner form of escape (comp. Eph. 5,7 -13 / Jam. 1,27 / 2.Cor. 6,14 -17).

This **escape** does not require isolation but is rather a spiritual act of inner conviction independent of time and space. A change of direction **away from worldly things to spiritual realities.** From the **moment of conversion and being born again** we actually have the **genes of God** activated in us. This precious pearl of pure divine spirit, which characterises part of our being when we are children is released in us (1. Joh. 3,9). Because we are truly a spirit. Behind the human veil and the worldly masks we bear the living sparks of divine spirit, birthed by the eternal Holy Spirit of God who came to us from eternity.

God calls me and shows me who He is. And then He shows me how glorious Christ is. He shows me the virtues of Christ. And then He also shows me the world, the system, civilisation, cultures, religions, etc. - and how all of that will one day disappear and won't last because it can never stand before God. And now according to this new **insight** and **knowledge** we have to live and choose between eternity with Jesus and vanity with its dead short-lived world. After we made the right choice God helps us carefully to leave our old habits and customs behind and be delivered by giving us strength through His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth step by step into all truth and is focused on Jesus Christ only.

The „**depravity**“ of the world was a product of sensual „**lust**“, the egoistic desire for selfish pleasure which always pulls us in the wrong direction. **Carnal „lust“** is all about the **lowest instincts** of the human physical temple. Instead of us controlling those selfish desires, they control us. This is „lust“ and sin.

The bible therefore teaches us right **moral heart attitudes** for the right handling of our innermost desires of all kind. Therefore earnest faith is important for all of us: a constant renewal of our faith, trust and knowledge concerning our Father and always being aware in our hearts that they are the beloved of God and that they should develop **a Christ-like character** by growing in our sanctification into perfect holiness (2. Petr. 1,10).

The verse in **2nd Petr. 1,5** is a very long sentence and introduced by the word „**therefore**“. This depiction presents the foundation of our life as Christians and our faith. Peter knows exactly that faith is not just a theoretical opinion or a mental assumption but a **“living – working – active – powerful thing”**. It does not ask if it can do good but before you even get to ask it has already accomplished good and is still doing it.

Peter encourages the believers **to give all their efforts to accomplish their goal**. It is common knowledge that most of the excellent people had **5% pure talent** and **95% eager diligence**, relentless repetition, constant practice and hard work.

Peter says simply: „**Be diligent**“ that your good works mark your calling and election. **Election** should not be something only coming from God, we must also do something. Election is built on by good works from our side. When we start to **do good** then the „good – lovely and pure – light“ in us increase. Also our **spiritual power** grows stronger the more we practice those things.

„**Virtue**“ can also be translated „**diligence**“. God is the one who makes us virtuous and diligent to live as children of God. As soon as God enters our life we live by another inexhaustable source of life and enter a different world. We have another „perspective“ where our opinions, insights, knowledge and attitudes change. We start to distance ourselves more or less from our former life by abstaining from many things based **on free will** and no longer want to participate in everything. Thus we practice self-control, self-denial, caution, gratitude, watchfulness and many other precious, divine virtues, especially when we feel a lot of resistance on the inside. The living power of God makes us diligent and strong to bear this necessary process of transition. Therefore the bible keeps emphasising „**longsuffering**“ (biblical: patience) (Gal. 5,22).

By the way: true **“brotherly love”** and actual **“love”** become only possible when we stand in a healthy and organized relation to God. It is always God who loves us first, who created us through love and sustains every one of us and will sustain us in eternity. Through the perfect devotedness of Jesus unto death, Father God has brought us from spiritual death of our coldness **into true life of pure merciful love**.

(**2. Petr. 1,7**) After one has been tested and proved he can accomplish the desired „**blessedness**“. From there a loving gaze goes back to those who still live in spiritual darkness and among who we should continue to live and bring salvation to them.

The "gnostics" and also other people who emphasise the intellect are educated esoterics who **lack the compassionate part of perspective** which enables us to see every single fellow men in the pure light of merciful love of God.

These **cold** theoretists quickly exalt themselves, are proud and consider themselves better than others or even despise other people, humanity and the natural in general but especially the brethren who are old, sick, weak, poor and simple. Often you cannot even talk to them because they are so **conceited**, alienated from this world and not sober. In all of their intellectual brightness the gnostics lack a loving heart and a friendly attitude (1. Joh. 3,14 / Rom. 5,5 / Gal. 5,22).

Das **neue Leben aus Gott** beginnt mit dem tiefen Glauben an Ihn und endet mit glühender, brennender Liebe für Ihn und mit den vielen anderen Früchten des Heiligen Geistes (2. Petr. 1,8 / 1. Thes. 4,10 – 12).

(**2. Petr. 1,9**) **“But if anyone does not have those things...”**, **he still lives in darkness**, is blind, shortsighted and forgetful. Peter is referring to a narrowing of the eye, a conscious drawing away from the truth.

Only **the practical actions** of Christian life that find their roots in faith in God bring us deeper into the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. All other things remain empty and cold theory or philosophy. **In the fight against „gnosis“ knowledge itself is not degraded, however**, but should rather be valued in its full meaning by the whole church.

The issue of knowledge according to intellect should not be a „taboo“ and put aside just because some evil false teachers are misusing and misapplying it. The author of the letter therefore boldly speaks about the **topic „knowledge“** and sets it in the right perspective without concern of the „gnostics“. He testifies them spiritual **„blindness“** and not a lack of knowledge, which could be excused.

(2. Petr. 1,9) Because of their conscious striving for „spiritual things“ in the form of new revelations and insights the gnostics all go astray and even leave normal practical life behind. They no longer take the everyday life things of life important, **cover up** the daily things or whitewash them like the Pharisees (Mat. 23,27). Thus they automatically forget the necessary cleansing of their old sins. They do not go deeper in sanctification and spiritual depth and stop to live a life of forgiveness, love and the grace of God. While they as „gnostics“ only seek for new **„high ways“** on the other end old sin and bad habits come up again so that their soul fills up with vice, negative attitudes and ego. Therefore Paul did not come to the Corinthians with such **„high words“** or another special **„high wisdom“** but only the message of the Crucified (1. Cor. 2,1 – 2).

(2. Petr. 1,10) Peter wrote this letter **because he knew the coming dangers and saw** how evil entered the church. He wanted to protect the church the most effective way, because if someone opens up to false teachings one, even if just a little bit, might lose his precious election and his true calling and does not realize that he misses the goal / purpose of his life.

The topic self-control does not refer to sexual askese but **self-discipline** in general (Act. 24,25 / Gal. 5,23 / Tit. 1,8). Also steadfastness and patience belong to the most important topics of faith in the Christian proclamations – besides the key topics love and faith (1. Tim. 6,11 / 2. Tim. 3,10 / Tit. 2,2).

Patience is promoted as a virtue that makes Christianity what it is now – a religion that can survive and assert itself against the unfavorable conditions of life as a religion of „hope that perseveres even under hard suffering“ (comp. 2. Cor. 1,6 / Rom. 8,25 / Rev. 2,2ff.,19; 13,10 and others).

Patience is a precious virtue of „self-control“. It refers to real **„self-control“** and more than just a moral practice of piety (2. Petr. 3,11). The knowledge of God is supposed to be complemented by us through effort and practice of self-control.

Self-control is NOT strict askese, but „self-discipline“. It is the actual practice of the so-called virtues which **create and enhance** the knowledge and love. And the other way around if you don't practice then you become spiritually shortsighted and blind (Mat. 15,14 / Joh. 9,39ff. / Rom. 2,19 / Rev. 3,17 / 1. Joh. 2,11). And at the end of letting yourself go even the »washing away of sin« of baptism (comp. 1. Cor. 6,11 / Eph. 5,26 / Hebr. 1,3) is forgotten. **Baptism** is understood as the final point of the past and interpreted as responsibility for the future.

(2. Petr. 1,10) Only the moral probation works continuous deepening „insight“ and keeps away spiritual blindness. Therefore the good-willing readers of the letter should also show forth some effort to strengthen their calling and election of God's grace. The »**strengthening**« was obviously a term **of ancient Christian terminology** (comp. 2. Cor. 1,21). It is only the divine Lord Jesus who strengthens us (2. Cor. 1,21 / 1. Cor. 1,8), but also **the Christian himself is expressly exhorted** to bring forth active effort. It is the own, upright, moral effort of a believer that makes the divine **„election“** legal and valid.

In this verse it is very clearly expressed that **„calling“ and „election“** are not alone **a one-sided act of God** (Rom. 8,30; 9,11). Here we can see that divine „election“ is not exclusively by receptive hearing of the gospel where the person only has to believe (1. Thes. 1,4) what God said and did. It makes it clear that the **deeds of God** only become **manifested in the believer through action**. Only in true „moral“ **co-work and perfect agreement** with God a man becomes without sin.

The call reminds us to fasten „election“ and make it serious and permanent. Calling and election always belong together. When Jesus called us personally and we answered Him with a willing heart we were chosen from this point on by God (comp. 1. Thess. 1,4 / Eph. 1,4). **We were chosen before the foundation of this earth** because God already **saw and knew us before** – especially the maturity and development of our souls at a given time.

But the **actual decision** does not just fall into eternity but is made here in this life, in the personal time here on earth.

God knew you **before the foundation of this world** up to the smallest detail of your whole being and what you will choose in your heart. And He knows you from the moment of your spiritual creation which is the moment when He enters into a love relationship with you. God consciously grants us the free and own possibility of choice. In the end it is not Him who makes a decision, but I make that decision for Him. I answer to the gentle call of the Father. But He in His omniscience could see beforehand what I would do and already rejoiced over it from the foundation of this earth on, knowing that one day I will turn to Him, freely choosing to love Him. This way He already establishes a „Father-child **relationship**“ with me, even though I do not exist yet, neither in the body, nor in the soul nor in the spirit.

The election of my soul happens right when I answer to the loving invitation of God with a positive answer. In the rebirth God then makes me a most precious being. This is how we become a called, and elected one of God (comp. 1. Thess. 1,4 / Mt. 22,14). And as a man, who really answered to the call of God because the living word of God moved and touched his heart, you are an elected and chosen one of God (comp. Jh. 14,21; 15,10; 16,27 / Pro. 8,17).

The two scriptures in Eph. 1,4 and 1. Petr. 1,2 **are not referring to election at a certain time**, but rather God's wise counsel and **foreknowledge**. Someone who heard the call of God is someone who was chosen from the foundation of this earth based on the foreknowledge of Christ. God saw and knew us „in Christ“ from the start. **Nobody is elected before He is „in Christus“.** There is no part in the scripture that says that a man outside of Christ Jesus is an elect of God. No part in the scripture tells us that some are chosen before they convert. Humans are only „chosen“ in Christ.

Election is an earnest word of love and a strong work of love of God. In election God makes us beloved treasures, precious jewels (comp. 1. Per. 2,4ff. and Luk. 23,35). Jesus Christ is the highest elected of God. **In the elect Jesus** God chose us. God saw His elect in Christ, the one He chose to save all the lost (Eph. 1,4). And because we are now **God's beloved and chosen** we should also live like His beloved and love Him back (comp. Joh. 14,21,23; 15,9,10). Because beloved are supposed to answer to love with love (Col. 3,12).

(2. Petr. 1,11) Only those who truly prove steadfast are offered entrance into the kingdom of Christ and get to partake in it. The author thinks of the **Second Coming of Jesus** (Parousia – as in 2. Petr. 1,4; 3,4,9 – 10). Now here on heaven applies the „**eternal kingdom of Christ**, because it comes down from eternity and is already identical for us with the **Kingdom of the Father** (Eph. 5,5 / 2. Tim. 4,1 / Rev. 11,15). The „**eternal kingdom of Christ**“ is still only a temporary and limited thing due to the fall of men, because at the end of a time period that is yet to come, which is after the perfection of our salvation and the eviction of Satan from the universe Jesus will return the reign to His heavenly Father, the only original eternal God (comp. 1. Cor. 15,24 / Dan.7,14 / Luk.1,33).

(2. Petr. 1,12 – 21) This is where the author came to **the actual purpose of the letter** by granting the reliability of Christian hope to all generations and teaches them the highest assurance of the truth.

Therefore he strongly emphasises the **Apostolic authorship**, even if it is only „fiction“. The reader should know that this is the „**testament**“ and the legacy of the apostle Peter. The thoughts of this letter were obviously written down shortly before Peter died so that the church would have a **reliable basis for their hope** (2nd Pet. 1,13 – 15).

The credibility of the eschatological proclamation of the apostle is based on the eye-testimony which stands as a parallel to the transfiguration expected in the Parousia (2. Petr. 1,16 – 18). This partly fulfillment is followed by the meaning of the **prophetic word** (vers 19), which is rightly exposed in the text of 2. Petr. 1,20 – 21.

It also describes the way how the inspiration of scripture was given through the Holy Spirit (also 2. Tim. 3,15 – 16). **Every scripture** that was given through the Holy Spirit can also only be understood through the Holy Spirit and practiced through the Holy Spirit. Since this is a matter of fact the author wants to „**remind us**“ (2. Petr. 1,12 / also compare Jam. 5 und 17). And also according to the statements of 1st Peter 3,1 it is very important to the author that they hold fast to the definite formulations of the doctrines that the apostles proclaimed so that they would be »**strong**« therein. In this sense we have to understand 2nd Peter 3:16,17, where certain topics of the Pauline letters were not only not understood, but even misunderstood and the ones who were yet unexperienced and those who were weak in their morals easily became victims of the false teachings.

Who reads and studies the bible, should also know a little more about it how it actually developed. When we begin to work through the bible, one thing must be clear to us from the start: Everything in it is inspired by God Himself and therefore holy and reliable. This awareness will have a certain effect which determines with what kind of inner attitude we will read and receive the holy scriptures. We will not be quick to interpret on our own, but ask God and His Holy Spirit to explain and interpret us His truth and to unlock these things in our heart.

Peter says: „**The word of God is not a product of people**“. God reveals Himself who is a pure spirit. Therefore the product of the prophets of the OT is exactly what God wanted to be said: The word of God! The voice of God was breathed into them. When the holy scripture speaks to us, God speaks, the Holy Spirit speaks. The same thing we can see when the OT is quoted in the NT: „What the Spirit of God says“ (Hebr. 3,7). Notice how it does not say „**said**“. The same Holy Spirit who spoke in the OT, **s p e a k s** (present tense!) the word of the OT still at the time of the NT. The word of God is not bound to time. His Holy living Spirit is always and eternally flowing. Especially in the Last Days many servants of God are prepared in their hearts to receive the new words of revelation.

The »**present truth**« is presented in 2nd Peter and also in Jam. 3 as the faith which was given to us once and for all and nothing can be added to it.

The revealed truths of the bible belong to the traditional „basic truths“ of faith (comp. 1. Tim. 6,5 / 2. Tim. 2,18 / Tit. 1,14). In the opposite to that we see „freely fictional myths“ which are created in the human mind (of 2. Petr. 1,16). This is referring to the gnostics who tried to speculate about the Parousia and tried to support their false doctrines (comp. 2. Petr. 3,4 – 5 / 1. Tim. 1,4/ 6,20). But Peter and his two co-apostles John and James were true eye-witnesses of the transfiguration of (Matt. 17,5). As such living witness by experience he grants his readers the apostolic faith with a pure conscience. This precious **apostolic legacy** would also grant this letter a special importance. **Death** is presented as a **termination**. Actually it is also described as „taking off of clothes“. For this life on earth our soul literally put on the garment of flesh and when it becomes worn out and unusable it will take it off again. We can find similar metaphors in the scriptures of 2. Cor. 5,2,4 and Is. 38,12, where the immortal soul leaves the mortal body.

Peter knows the work of Jesus will **prevail**. Death and hell cannot and will not destroy the works of Jesus. In order to make this clear again he summarizes in short words what he has seen and heard, which were not **fictional legends, but matters of facts**. Here he himself can stand as a living evidence of the authenticity of traditions. Peter was among the other apostles an **eye witness** of the divine majesty of Jesus Christ. Also the other apostles were direct **eye-witnesses** of the royal glory of the Lord Jesus.

Also **the Gospel of Mark** which was written by Peter speaks about the Second Coming, the appearance of Jesus and topics referring to the event on the mount (Mark. 9,1,4,18, 22).

Peter shows His readers: „The eternal kingdom is a true reality. I have seen it with my own eyes when I saw Jesus transfigured!“

The miracle of the mount of transfiguration also helped to enhance the word, the OT prophetic word in the scripture and reassure their truthfulness.

The **message of the OT testified of the coming Christ**. This promise of the coming of Christ was now fulfilled. The apostles witnessed it at the mount. Peter was a witness. The OT message was therefore proven and fulfilled and undermined in its spiritual content. „**Miracles**“ **are a means** to help people pay more attention to the written word.

The miracle itself does not produce faith, but it supports, underlines and proves the proclaimed message. And also those who already believe experience that their faith increases.

(**2. Petr. 1,12**) For the author the whole life of the church stood in the light of **great expectations for the future**. Therefore he tried to encourage and strengthen the believers in their faith and accompany them in their trials and tribulations by reminding them again and again of the eternal truths.

The believers always need „**reminders**“ because the devil is always watching and seeking to weaken the precious word of God and make them forget. Since the Christians are so easily conformed back to this world every earnest reminder of the important things are healing and helpful.

After the bible verse in **Joh. 14,26** it is the Holy Spirit Himself who works through the apostles, preachers and teachers to remind the believers. The desire to remember in the biblical context is a constant "**reminding of**" and being aware of everything God said and did.

The **Communion** as such is a repeated conscious „remembering“ (1. Cor. 11,24 ff.).

Here Peter gives us help to stay „watchful“ and „steadfast“. Perhaps Peter speaks from own experience since he himself passed out in two decisive moments (Luk. 2,32 – on the mount Mark.14 – in the garden Gethsemane). Every time Jesus woke him up and encouraged him to „watchfulness“, but always with compassion and gentleness. Today the word of God still calls us to watchfulness (2. Petr. 1,20; 3,1) and not sleeping in the bitter vanity of the visible world.

We humans always need to refresh our memory. Actually in every aspect but especially in spiritual things of truth. We humans often forget easy and simple which sometimes is of advantage but usually a disadvantage. Even though we often know a lot of things we awkwardly need the permanent reminder and repetition. The Holy Spirit helps and reminds us (Joh. 14,26; 15,20; 16,4 / Hebr. 10,3). This reminder strengthens us.

We are supposed to remember the holy, good deeds of God with cheerfulness, think of the promises of God and also the judgment that is a product of His wisdom and counsel. Peter knows from experience how important regular reminders are. A crowing cock used to remind him what Jesus told Him before concerning his faithfulness (Mat. 26,34,74 -75 / Mark. 14,68,72 / Luk. 22,60 / Joh. 18,27).

(2. Petr. 1,13 - 14) Through the constant **reminding** our faith stays alive and awake. Just like humans have to consume nutritions every day, how much more does he daily need the bread of heaven. Therefore Peter wants to do his best to refresh the people's and church's memory as long as he lives. The church and its members have to be "**refreshed**" anew over and over again through the living memory of all those who already know and can testify (1. Cor. 15,1 – 2).

The "**forgetting**" happens by a mellowing sleepiness, falling asleep even with regard to the promise and expectation we have of the future (comp. Rom. 13,11 / 1.Thess. 5,6 – 8).

(2. Per. 1,14 – 16) The author does not speak of his soon coming death there. Some remember the statement of Joh. 21,18ff., where a martyr death is prophesied to Peter. He still might have had some clue or revelation of his coming death just like also apostle Paul did (Act. 20,25; 21,11 / 2.Tim. 4,6). Therefore he produces a written record of his testimony for the generations to come so that the readers can recall and quote him anytime.

This also lays **the foundation** for the written fixation of the New Testament in order to ensure a secure continuity of the Christian faith. In the beginning the message of Jesus of the first Christians and the content of the apostolic proclamations and teachings was only passed on „**orally**“ but then they were also supposed to be **secured, maintained**“ and „**stored**“.

When Peter says „**WE**“ (2. Petr. 1,16,1) he refers to all the apostles together. At this point Peter once more uses his „key“ authority and opens a new phase of „tradition“ of faith for all people of all times. He gave the green light for the written **production of the New Testament**. Later generations were supposed to have something **authentic** at hand in order to discern heresy and reject it and to establish their faith in the truth. Every believer was supposed to have the truth at hand, so that they could concretely oppose Jewish or Pagan philosophies and fiction (comp. 1. Tim. 1,4; 4,7 / 2. Tim. 4,4 / Tit. 1,14).

In this letter we find concrete objection of false doctrines:

- (2. Petr. 1,16ff.): Objection of the denial of the Second Coming of Christ- („fairytale / fiction“)
- (2. Petr. 2, 3ff.): Objection of the denial of the intervention of God's judgment – (God is at slumber and has not judged so far and will not judge in future)
- (2. Petr. 3, 3ff.): Objection of the denial of the intervention of God's judgment - („Where is it?“)
- (2. Petr. 3, 8ff.): Objection of the denial of the Second Coming of Christ („God will not judge since we have not seen Him for so long.)

Those who truly believe in God do not follow some kinds of fairytales, stories, myths, legends, fictions or philosophies even if some truth might lie in it, **but they follow a testimony which is confirmed by the witness of two or three concerning the truth of God.**

- At first those were the direct, self-witnessed accounts of the disciples of Jesus,
- then came the overwhelming self-revelation of Jesus after His resurrection,
- then all the historical facts and archaeological discoveries.
- Witnessing evidence is also your own experience, when you experience Jesus in your own life just as the Samaritan woman did,
- furthermore the great testimonies of the Holy Spirit in the form of revelation to self, inner assurance and conviction as well as an „Aha-experience“.

- Then we have evidence such as the written testimony, which is the bible itself.
- The long existence of the church of Jesus is also a testimony we cannot deny inspite of persecution, destruction and temptation.
- The Jews themselves are a testimony because they are still alive, even tho they were all scattered abroad just like Jesus predicted it.
- The strange hate of the unbelievers toward Christianity that was established by Jesus was a huge testimony. Because if it was not of any interest then nobody would have bothered. But the expressions of hate shows that Jesus is truth and love inspite of controversion.
- Especially the many martyrs and witnesses of Christ are evidence of faith. Such people would never freely offer up themselves for a spiritual idea or go through such pain and torture. But who gives up everything with joy for something, then he probably knows exactly why and what for – and that must be something worthy and awesome, like our Father God in Jesus Christ.
- Then the many social works of the merciful, compassionate and selfless love, which Christianity brought forth in history and it still goes on.

All of that are true examples for real testimonies that faith is not just a mere myth.

Myths are strange religious stories from the early ages of the people. They exist in all religions and cultures. The word used for the characterisation of myths "**elaborated**" is not supposed to be offensive. Because in myths people found their soul development and voiced original understanding of the world, his thinking about death and life, religious longing, meditation about God. In this way they are inspired to deep thoughts. Maybe in some corners there can really be found some truth about God, since the spirit of God works everywhere however He likes. But these many **mythological ideas** all have one fault: They were produced by men. True Christianity must be a work of the Holy Spirit alone, since it is still alive inspite of all opposition, division and tension. Even when it was declared dead, Christianity rose again as we can see in many movements of revival. The gospel of Jesus is still on a triumphal march around the world and the cosmos.

For a "myth" there is no eye-witness as such, unlike the power and parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Peter stands before one of these churches as an **eye-witness**. He emphasises this very consciously because the people easily perceived the gospel as a myth – an thus the many accounts from the bible are unfortunately considered only fairytales for the purpose of chastisement nowadays.

There was much talking about the **myth** of a "dying" and "resurrecting" God. Myths of this kind were often used as images of philosophers in order to point out something. But nobody ever saw such a **dying and resurrecting God**, so that it could be testified. This death and resurrection was not even seriously understood as a real event but rather a corresponding metaphor for the circle of perishing and receiving new life in nature.

But of **Jesus** John testifies for all apostles: "**we saw His glory!**" (Joh. 1,14 / 1. Joh. 1 and 3). In the beginning **that was the written testimony of the apostle**. At first – like all letters of the apostle – only adressng a certain circle of recipients. But in the course of time the generations of the church were scattered among all nations and parts of the earth. The spiritual fruits of all books, epistles and accounts of the bible were a huge advantage. Maybe Peter already saw this coming when he gave his epistle no certain adress. „*For the apostles there is no successor and for their epistles no substitute. Therefore the church finds her foundation in the New Testament*“ (Schlatter).

Peter did not primarily refer to the many and incredible signs and wonders **in his testimony** of Jesus. He did not even refer to the resurrection of Jesus and how he personally saw the risen One. He focused his testimony on the unique experience when **Jesus was transfigured** on the mount (Mat. 17,1 – 9).

The great transfiguration of Jesus is not comparable with one of the many appearances of Jesus after Easter. For this reason Peter wants to produce a written account of especially this event. He saw Jesus in His perfect „power“, „majesty“ and „perfection“. There on the mount he already saw the dawning of the Kingdom of God in a way that no account of any Easter event could describe the risen One. Also Paul encountered **the Lord after His resurrection** when he was on his way to Damascus.

(**2. Petr. 1,17**) Peter experienced and witnessed a living evidence for the divine continuity of salvation in the „**transfiguration of Jesus**“. He also saw **Moses** and **Elijah**, the two great representatives of the **law and the prophets** and their glorious perfection through Jesus. He called this moment the **divine confirmation**, that God was pleased with Jesus. God explicitly indicated that to the disciples. When the disciples lifted up their eyes they only saw Jesus. But the "**testimony of God**", that they had heard was still left for them. This made **Peter a witness** also for the churches.

(**2. Petr. 1,17,18**) The experience on the mount of transfiguration must have had a lasting effect on Peter, so that he only gets to process the event in the letter, interpreted and explained it. The voice that he had heard from heaven (Mark. 9,2,7 – 9), was not only the voice of Jesus, but a divine voice that prompted them: „To Him you must listen!“ They were eye- and ear- witnesses of His power and greatness. They experienced His power and strength. **The transfiguration of Jesus was a special privilege** of the apostle. They saw a piece of heaven on earth, just like when God revealed Himself to Israel on the holy mount in the Old Testament (Ps. 2,6 / Is. 11,9).

(**2. Petr. 1,18**) Peter was and is a very important witness of the „God-man“ Jesus. To refer to Jesus as carnal was something he rejected for he had seen and known a different Jesus. The Jesus who revealed Himself on the mount was totally different than the „historical“ Jesus of the court hearing. Also the apostle **John**, who was there in this transfiguration gave the same testimony to support the evidence (1. Joh. 5,9) .

(**2. Petr. 1,19 – 20**) **The testimony of the prophets**. In the transfiguration of Jesus on the mount Moses and Elijah, the two great representatives of the laws and the prophets, appeared to Peter.

(**2. Petr. 1,19**) The new **New Testament proclamations** are based on the calling and action of God in the OT in view of Israel. Therefore we see so many scriptures of the Old Testament in the New Testament. The NT is alive and established in the ancient words of the prophets. Without the revelations of the OT we would not be able to fully understand the NT today. God establishes His revelations based on His divine law of order and wisdom – even until today.

(**2. Petr. 1,19**) The **transfiguration** was a holy and overwhelming event for the apostles. It was like a sneak preview of the great return of Jesus to earth (Parousia). They were at first deeply impressed that this transfiguration could take place within a few moments. They were moved that they were allowed to experience the transcendence from one sphere into the next.

For Peter the **event of transfiguration** was greater and of more importance than his experience with the risen One. He already **knew** the exalted and transfigured Jesus who was far more to Him than just the „risen“ Christ. Therefore he established and connected his **revelation experience** with this event on the mount of Tabor. After all there were **three** disciples who were eye-witnesses of the transfiguration where Jesus was proclaimed the new Moses by God Himself (Mat. 17,1 – 8).

The disciples fell down before the Lord Jesus and worshiped. They saw **His eternal glory** for a couple of moments and they forgot the present time. The transfiguration **was an intervention of another reality of being into an unreal world of appearance**. Here Jesus was on the mount in contact with the other world, the Kingdom of God. This is how we should also be – living in two worlds – a perishable and carnal one as well as an eternal and immaterial one. While we are living in a visible world we are supposed to keep in contact with the invisible world because this world is perishing (2. Petr. 3).

(**2. Petr. 1,20**) The **word of the prophet** speaks of our great future of the glory of our God and the perfection of His kingdom.

God's glory is so powerful that it can hardly be described by human words. That is one of the reasons why the prophets used to speak in common metaphors and familiar symbols. These images and symbols now have to be revealed, interpreted, unveiled and explained in its spirituality. This again cannot happen in a simple intellectual or rational, human wisdom. The interpretation of the present and the future must always be given by the Holy Spirit.

The real **distressing example for the arbitrary interpretation** of the bible is tragically the chosen people of Israel themselves who were eagerly looking for the **Messiah** and diligently explored the scriptures, but the moment when the **long expected Messiah appeared in Jesus** they did not recognize Him. Some of them denied Him on purpose against inner conviction or notion that He could be the promised one only because they were afraid to have disadvantages in life and would have to lower their sights. Instead of rejoicing and being glad they rejected, tortured and crucified Him, this soft, loving and holy Messiah Jesus Christ. This is hard to believe and even harder to understand but yet the most terrible of all things happened due to the many "**selfish interpretation**" of scripture out of the cold human intellect which made the people of the Jews totally **blind and stubborn**.

Arbitrary interpretations of prophecies always lead to confusion, disputes, division and finally to bitter disappointment and cold-hearted stubbornness, just like it happened in Judaism.

(2. Petr. 1, 20) Here Peter warns us **of our »own interpretatio« of the prophecies of the scripture**. It can usually only happen through inner guidance by the Holy Spirit of perfection and His revelations. Without the rebirth of the Holy Spirit a human cannot understand anything of the Kingdom of God (Joh. 3,3,5).

All that which you try to explain and interpret without the help of the Holy Spirit inevitably ends in **speculation** and becomes a false, impure prophecy and deceptive teaching (2. Petr. 2,1) and leads to heresy.

For the author of 2nd Peter the whole Old Testament is a **sheer prophecy** because it predicts Jesus and His work. A sure characteristic that an interpretation is given by the Holy Spirit is when you see **Jesus Christ glorified in an accurate manner**, and if this is appropriately and with appreciation traced back to Him and explains / exalts His glory.

Jesus said: „The Holy Spirit will glorify me!“ All precious things that are given by the Holy Spirit is perfected in the work of Jesus in us and in the world. What originates from the spirit of god can only be understood by the same spirit of God and interpreted correctly. Only when we speak the same language we can make ourselves understood and communicate. In this case this relates to the spiritual language of God.

The author of the letter totally denies all heresies about the spirit of God (2. Petr. 2,1), because they are idle and rational interpretations of the holy scripture of God. Even if they were theoretically accurate and stuck to the apostolic traditions, they would have to be wrong because they promote the letter instead of the spirit.

A typical **characteristic of false prophets is** that they **teach out of themselves**.

This means that God did not give them an assignment or sent them out. A true message of God and the Holy Spirit belong together inseparably (comp. Act. 5,32 and 15,28).

(2. Petr. 1,21) We have to be very reluctant concerning interpretations of the precious prophecies. We should not be quick to name **dates**, political events, etc. Even Jesus Himself said: „day and hour are only known by the Father alone...“ (Mat. 24,36). Martin Luther, the adventists, Jehova witnesses, new apostolic and many more often had a concrete date or year for the end of the time of salvation, the rapture of the church and the return of Jesus or other important related events... until now none of that happened as predicted.

(2. Petr. 1.21) Since only God and His spirit can produce true prophecy, also the correct interpretation can only come from Him. Neither the spiritual creation nor the correct interpretation can be produced by human will or might, because it is simply impossible. The whole holy scripture and here especially the New Testament is based on the **inner inspiration** in the form of a dictation by the Holy Spirit of God. Of course it is the same with the Old Testament (com. Jer. 23,16 / Ez. 13,3 / Mark. 12,36 / 2. Tim. 3,16).

Peter describes the **origin of prophecy** and **how to deal with it**. Prophetic words are and remain some kind of mysterious secret (1. Petr. 1,10 – 11). When the prophet delivers a message he often does not know the application thereof, especially not the exact time when this will happen or if this will indeed happen.

A little hing: When a prophecy of God is indicating a certain term of **time**...

- ...**"immediately"**... ...could refer to a day up to three years,
- ...**"very soon"**... ...could be 3 to even 10 years,
- ...**"now"** or **"today"**... ...could even be 10- 40 years,
- ...**"soon"** or **"quickly"**is sometimes even a term for 1000 – 2000 years or more (just like for the return of Jesus)

If a prophecy says **"I will"**...

- ...means sometimes in your life,
- ...when you are obedient,
- ...when the time has come,
- ...when cairos, the time of God has arrived.

The **exact fulfillments of prophecies** always have a certain time that God has purposed.

Jonah prophesied the word of God and the prophecy was not fulfilled immediately because the people of Ninive took the warning seriously and they did everything to turn away God's wrath.

Some **prophecies of Jesus** did not manifest in the 2000 years and not even until today (Mat. 24). Was Jesus a wrong prophet? Jesus is not only some prophet but the Lord of heaven and earth in person.

Peter wrote that in the last days **many mockers would rise** and will ask where the promises of His return and all the other proclamations are (2. Petr. 3,3,4 / Jud. 18). One has to be able to understand and interpret **prophecies** the right way. First of all you need the Holy Spirit for that and furthermore one should know that each prophecy always presents just a piece of a bigger picture (1. Cor. 13,8). Prophecies are always related to each other and tied to certain conditions.

Then you also have to be aware of the distinctiveness of **godly understanding of time**. And that is what differs strongly from our usual imaginations. God in His eternal being and infinity is never in a rush but always on time when things should happen according to His divine will. God always proclaims His will through His servants (Amos. 3,7,8), so that we can be prepared.

The **flood** was announced 120 years in advance. Was Noah a false prophet just because it did not start to rain immediately and the flood did not arrive at the same time as the prophetic word?

Isaiah's prophecies only came to pass after **600** years. That is a very long time for us. Not him nor any of the people who lived at that time ever got to see it manifest. The same also applies to **Daniel**. Or let us think of the visions of **Ezekiel** (Gog and Magog), which are not manifested to this day.

Relating to our dramatic end time era we should not belittle the current prophecies only because it seems like between prophecy and manifestation there seems to be a lot of time because at some point the future will have to become a present situation, but when that will be known only God.

After Peter also earnestly warned of arbitrary interpretations of the prophetic word, he speaks of an even more **dangerous way of dealing with prophecy**. Because there are also willfully „lying prophets“ among the people who taught lies and infected the church, brought division and therewith caused massive damage.

And indeed Israel had to fight a constant war against **pseudo-prophets** who were **false prophets in two ways**: not only was the **content** of their messages not true and deceptive, but also **their bold claim of being a divine prophet** was a sheer lie. They presented themselves, even today, as divine teachers without carrying a divine calling of God on the inside. Contentwise the messages and teachings should be labeled subtle, dangerous and deceptive.

The old Christian churches were suffering so much under the „**false prophecies**“ and the **deceptive proclamations and teachings** which lead to divisions and partiality (1. Cor.1,4 - 16; 3,1- 4). The "**teaching**" plays a major part in the NT and builds the foundation of the Christian church. Therefore this is a gift of God entrusted to only certain "**teachers**" (comp. 12,7 / 1. Cor. 12,28 / Eph. 4,11 / Jam. 3,1). But if someone teaches in the church of Christ without **a real calling**, he is not only insolent but also becomes a sinful "**liar**" against God, because he is proclaiming a false word, „**a different gospel**“ (Gal. 1,6) and infects the spirit of unity in an intact church.

In the course of church history we often saw how the church members were blinded by the impressive rhetoric of the false teachers. Therefore Peter uses such a harsh language *treng Sprache* (2.Petrus 2,13b - 22).

Even if those slick „false teachers“ find **a lot of followers**, they and their lives and their teaching still belong to **the unrighteous** who will only be spared until the day of judgment. The faithful church member should consider their condition as a big temptation and healing „**test**“. This is basically the usual condition of this world of deception, lies and appearance on this planet that was made for our hearts to learn. Our relationship to our God and Father has to be strengthened, developed and made perfect by temptations of all kind so that we would always be prepared for the work of ministry. God guides them through their tests and trials so that the faith would prove to be pure, just like gold through the fire.

Peter continues with the depiction and judgment of the false teachers and their followers. "*Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.*" and "*A washed pig will go back to roll in the dung*" (Pro. 26,11).

„...**Fishing for unstable souls**“ - Just like today there have always been unstable souls in the church that "**would be tossed by the wind of any teaching**". The so-called „**unstable**“, however, are not completely innocent even though they are tempted. Because every one is still responsible for his own actions and received free will as well as conscience as a gift from God.

While in Chapter 1 the false teachers are only mentioned and not in direct focus, the author now addresses the **heretics** with even more detail and severity in agreement and obvious dependency on the language and thoughts of the **heretics polemic of the Epistle of Jude**. In **Chapter 2** Peter (as well as Jude) applies three **examples of punishment for false teachers in the OT** (2. Petr. 2,4 – 6) and also mentions another example

of the righteous (2. Petr. 2,7ff.) to draw a conclusion from a general interpretation thereof. (2. Petr. 2,9).

Chapter 2

The 2nd Epistle of Peter is a typical „**pastoral letter**“, which is warning the believers of present and future false teachings because eventually they all have the same roots and origin as back in the days.

The false teachers can be recognized by their **special teachings** or special revelation by adding human thoughts and interpretations to the apostolic testimonies, such as the book of the Mormons or the like. Furthermore you can recognize such spiritual false „lights“ when **one person draws** a lot of attention as for example many charismatic leaders (comp 1.Cor. 1,11 - 13; 3,4 – 7). Another very typical **characteristic of sectarianism** is the conviction and claim they themselves could „**alone bless someone**“ (comp. Phil. 3,13) or even better and honorable than all others. False teachers also **have a tendency** to legalism, dogma and regulations, etc. in order to be sanctified and holy before God (1. Tim. 4,1 – 3 / Col. 2,18 / 1. Tim. 2,5).

The word „**heresy**“ means to **“lead astray”** and can also be interpreted by „wrong, false, perverse“. The word „teaching“ is referring to an interpretation, respectively the content of a religious orientation in general. Referring it only to Christian faith in general is wrong interpretation of the text, or going beyond the true, biblical and God revealed intention of the text (1.Cor.15,33 / Joh.14,6 / Rev. 22,18-21/ Gal.1,8).

Therefore „**heresy**“ (divergence from ecclesiastical doctrine) is a general problem of almost all world religions. In **ancient Judaism the judgment of a heretic** would not be so dramatic as to exclude this person from Judaism.

Their status as a Jew would not be taken from them, **but their faith** would be seriously questioned. Since **Maimonides** (12th century) the Jews consider **every expression of Jewish reformation** as a heretical movement.

Jesus and then His apostles did not adopt or reform Judaism. The Saviour Jesus brought a totally **new revelation of God** into this world, as for example to be allowed to call God **“Abba”** Father.

Jesus **revealed a new perspective** to the women and the Gentiles in the sense that also they could be an equal participant of the kingdom of God. **Mary** was allowed to **sit at the feet of Jesus** and be a **student of the rabbi** and be taught by Him personally. And also that **Martha** would serve the guests (Luke 10,38 – 42) was unthinkable and very extraordinary and would have been considered a taboo in times before.

Nobody up to this day influenced the world in such a way as Jesus. In the course of world history the deep impact of Jesus was never surpassed by another. No other great leader brought such positive change into the life of His followers like He Himself did. People who encountered the risen Christ in their own life were totally turned around. Also sceptics and opponents of Jesus were totally changed – for example the younger brother of Jesus, **James** or **Saul of Tarsus** who was one of the lead persecutors of the first Christians.

With the apostles the **highest authority concerning the right teaching were the apostles themselves** – as for example at the apostolic council. The apostles were taking sharp measures against doctrines that they would not teach, concerning topics such as circumcision, food and sabbath regulations. It is remarkable that the traveling Jews would repeatedly try to „**Judaize**“ Christians by teaching them the Jewish feasts and tried to tie them to the temple and the laws of Moses (compare the remarks of the Epistle to the Hebrews - Lesson 11). The apostles had received the assignment to teach by Jesus Himself (Mat. 28,17- 20).

(2. Petr. 2,1 – 13) The threatening judgment of the profane actions of the heretics. These heretics were also Christians who actually **had** experienced the effect of redemption and had been delivered from slavery of the devil under Judaism or Paganism.

These false teachers, just like all the other sects would doubt **the unity of God with people and the servanthood of the Son of God**. Also the apostle John is referring to that kind of denial of Jesus (1. Joh. 2,23; 4,2; 5,12 / 2. Joh. 7,9).

Sects and false teachers were and are always a threat for the church of Jesus at all times. The sects are somehow the „**unpaid debts**“ of the Christians. They were a result of neglected teachings or missing out on certain topics when they were trained up.

It is a fact: **false teachings produce false life**. A false teaching is a result of false proclamations which then cause division and strife (Rom. 16,17,18). It is not the person who would turn the back on His church and the congregation physically, but it is he who leaves the solid ground of biblical truth in the bottom of his heart and

spirit. Every believer is responsible for himself, to care for his salvation and to flee from false prophets and teachers and to avoid fellowship with heretic churches or sects (Deut.13,1-3 / Matth. 7,15 / 24,23,24 / Act. 20,30,31/ Rom. 16,17,18 / 1.Cor. 10,18,21 / 11,19 / 6,14 – 18 / Gal. 5,9).

How should you react to false teachers and teachings such as sects.

You should not receive it and not listen to it. Jesus told us: "Beware of false teachers and false prophets!" (Mat. 9,30; 16,6 / Luk. 12,1; 20,46 / Mark. 12,38).

Paul wrote to the Galatians: „Whoever preaches a different gospel should be accursed.“ (Gal. 1:8,9). Only a little leaven, leavens the whole dough (Gal. 5,9).

There is nothing better than a solid and balanced **foundation of faith** (Mat. 7,24 - 27).

What the false teachers always have in common: Christ is **NOT** the center. God does not tolerate competition (comp. Joh. 718; 8,50,54; 12,43). God does not suffer another god in our life. As a Father He only accepts as His Son who is in His Son. He will not tolerate that someone would take His glory.

In the bible we see two ways of false teachings ...

- ...such who say: we need more freedom than the bible says. This leads to „lawlessness“.
- ...such who say: we need more laws than the bible says. This leads to „legalism“.

Jesus redeemed us of both burdens – lawlessness (Tit. 2) and the law (Gal. 3). We have all in Jesus Christ (Col. 2,10).

What the **false prophets** were in the OT are **the false teachers** in the NT. **In the OT they lived off of prophecy and in the NT off of teachings.** What was „prophesied“ is „taught“ today. God wrote history in Christ. The church today looks back to the past. They look back. This is the teaching. Today we live by the historical truth of the gospel. Before Jesus came the prophets would speak falsely about the things to come, after Jesus would have come. Now there are **false teachers** speaking falsely about the salvation that Jesus has brought. The false prophets **projected a false image of God** and the false teachers in the NT are teaching **a false Jesus.**

Those false „christs“ are easily discerned by the bible reading audience. This was more difficult with the **false prophets**. Because if there is a Christ who returns who will be easy to recognized, there will be many real and false prophets and messias (comp. Jer. 8,10ff.; 23,9ff.; 26,28).

The bible challenges us to **test the spirits**“ if they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out to the world (1. Joh 4,1).

Therefore it gives us the following criteria:

- ◆ They simply add to the bible or take something away (1.Cor.4,6/ 2Joh1,9 /Rev. 22,18)
- ◆ They invent teachings that are contrary to the context of the word and in relation to the overall message of the bible (Gal. 1,6ff.).
- ◆ They overlook central truths of Christian faith and deny Jesus and His work. They especially deny the Sonship of Jesus, His incarnation, His sacrificial death on the cross and His physical resurrection (1. Joh. 2,22ff.; 4,2ff. / 2. Joh. 1,7 / 2. Petr. 2,1 / Jam. 4).
- ◆ Their claims are a devious mix of truth and lie that would tempt people into deception (Joh. 8,44 / 2. Cor. 11,14).
- ◆ They prophecy the future and present it as divine revelation from God and then it does not come true (Jer. 28,9).
- ◆ Their many promises are often wrapped up in beautiful words (Mat. 7,15).
- ◆ Their teachings often provide, but not always, a false gospel of peace, love, harmony, unity and tolerance (Jer. 6,13ff.). The teaching contents sometimes present a wrong or exaggerated understanding of the judgment of God.

How do you discern the salvation-bringing „true gospel“ from the deceptive „false gospel“? False teachers **mis a little poison** into the mild of the gospel and many innocent Christians drink of it without noticing. The bible exhorts us to be watchful and to test if the indwelling spirit is truly of God.

We should always ask the Holy Spirit for protection, blessing and discernment. To unmask false teachers it is often enough to take a close look at their **„fruits“** (Mat. 7,16).

But in order to really judge a fruit it takes time and patience. Therefore you cannot do it through superficial obligation and should not draw hasty conclusions and be quick to judge. **A false teacher will always seek the**

personal honor. Know if he – glorifies himself in an egocentric way, his own ideas and ideals, or does he glorify Jesus? The true apostles were „christocentric“ in their approach and attitude. They never sought their own honor or personal success. They were even ready to be crucified, mocked and despised. They did not live a comfortable, or pompous life (2. Cor. 4,16 – 6,10; 11,5 – 10,17 – 33).

→ **None of the apostolic servants of God** ever called someone up stage to testify what happened to them through their ministry. Also Jesus never boasted with the people He healed from leprosy, blindness or lameness. To some He even expressly said they should not tell anyone because it might hurt their faith and therefore cause damage to their soul.

→ **A false teacher would preach the gospel for money** (comp. Luk. 1 2,15 / Tit. 1,11 / 1. Petr. 5,2 / James 11 / 1. Cor. 2,17). The upright teachers will not try to make the word of God their personal gain or capital. The apostle of Jesus served the people „for free“ and trusted God that He would provide for them (Mat. 10,8 – 14).

→ **A false teacher is always boasting.** He talks about how much he fasts and how often he has read the bible. He boasts about the revelations he received and what he has established. He boasts about the many souls he has reached and how he went to heaven himself. In a very carnal way he would speak about his spirituality and what kind of anointing he has etc. (comp. Jam. 4,16 / Col. 2,18 / 1. Cor. 5,6 / Rom. 4,2 / 2. Cor. 10,8; 11,30). Before God we are all the same and have all fallen short (Rom. 3,23,27).

→ **Someone who really serves God** is a servant and slave of Jesus Christ (comp. 1. Cor. 3,4 - 11; 4,1 / 2. Cor. 11,14 – 15,23 – 28).

→ **A false teacher has a „controlling“ spirit.** The bible speaks of „disciplinarians“ (1. Cor. 4,15). Such „disciplinarians“ discipline the believers, lay burdens on them, give them regulations and place them under disability. They have no mercy, compassion or understanding with the children of God, the weak and the poor, etc. Jesus, however, takes on the burdens of people (Mat. 11,27 – 30). Truly spiritual people are „fathers and mothers“ in Jesus Christ. They are mature people.

→ **False teachers are proud even when they perform with humility** (2. Tim. 3,5 / Col. 2,23). They are wolves in sheep clothing (Mat. 7,15). They tempt the people by apparent piety which they perform like a show. They always pursue their selfish motives (Mat. 24,4,23 – 25). Such negative teachers could even have all nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, but as soon as we get to know them and have fellowship with them , personal relationship in every-day-life, they let their guard down. They show their real face and whose spiritual children they truly are.

Just in the case when we ourselves have an inner relationship with God we will be able to see recognize deception and expose the false teachers (Joh. 1,5 – 7).

But be careful, when we exaggerate our prudence and judge „alleged false teachers“ based on our limited, human and rational measures, without letting the „light of the Holy Spirit“ shine in our heart. Otherwise we might condemn faithful and real servants of God as „false apostles“ and therewith do sth very wrong which is sin before God. The devil is only waiting for us to do so (1. Petr. 5,8), because our adversary is **the accuser of the bretheren.**

The apostle Peter radically gets even with the false teachers.

(**2. Petr. 2,10 – 12**) the character of the false teachers is presented as reckless and blaspheming scamps who will be punished in the judgment of God. **The author gets even with the pseudo prophets** because they interpret prophecies **according to their own interpretation** and according to **haphazard convenience**. They are like the false prophets in the Old Testament (comp. 1. Kin. 22 / Is. 28,7ff. / Jer. 28 – 29 / Ez. 13 / Mi. 3 / Deut. 13,2ff.), and the NT announces **pseudo teachers** for the church (Mat. 24,11 / Rev. 16,13; 19,20 / 1. Joh. 4,1).

This way the wrong gospel was brought to the people of God in a sneaky way. You could not act neutral towards any schools teaching diverse doctrines of this kind (Act. 5,17; 15,5; 26,5) but you had to reject such false doctrines as heresy because otherwise they would cause division of all kinds (1. Cor. 11,18). A tactic of the enemy was to put to silence the warning voice of the shepherd.

The **second reproach** the author states is that they despise the »**Master**«. This also comes from the text of James 4, but it refers namely to Jesus. He is the one who »**purchased**« them and made them His own. This is not so much a **statement of salvation** (1. Cor. 6,20; 7,23 / Rev. 5,9) but much more an aggravation of the reproach. Therefore, this is his threat, they will bring condemnation upon themselves as soon as God will speak the eschatological judgment upon all heretics.

It is amazing that they still find so many followers. According to the opinion of the author it is not so much the false teachings that the people catch on than much more the life style of the false teachers (comp. 2. Petr. 2,7,10,14,18). But the good, the way of truth and the revealed things of God are not so much mocked and rejected by unbelievers but rather **heretics in the church**. The **reason** is because they do not consequently and clearly distance themselves from this error. Thus the sin of the heretics reveals a demonic spirit that is sometimes even worse than that of the exorcists (Rom. 2,24 /Tit.2,5).

The **trick of the false teachers** has always been to recruit their followers from fallen, unsatisfied and unstable believers. Only seemingly strengthened they mock the church and deny their holy doctrines of truth (Jam. 8,10 / 2. Petr. 2,10).

Since **God Himself was manifested in truth through the word** and revealed Himself to the world through His chosen apostles, they proclaimed the Lord to us in the way the Holy Spirit inspired them. But the heretics mocked the divine accounts by rejecting them as the work of human hands and inspiration of human thoughts and questioned the content thereof.

They themselves, on the contrary, claim that they receive their revelations directly from God – however, without ever measuring their spiritual outpouring with the godly foundation which can only be found in the biblical records of the apostles. For reasonable revelation you need both: „**logos**“, the written word, and „**rhema**“, a word given by the Holy Spirit for a current situation. Logos and rhema cannot be separated because they complement, confirm and manifest each other in inter-relation. But if logos and rhema are separated from each other, when the truthful eternal word of God is not brought into context with the living, fresh word we end up with false teachings or doctrines. **Logos and rhema** were and are both given by the same godly spirit.

Therefore the **division of „logos“ and „rhema“** is always some kind of heresy and rebellion against God. It therefore represents a **„distortion of the truth“** which end in some mythological speculations or other spiritual deviations and lapses like angelic blasphemy and the like.

According to the depiction of the author such debates are based on money, reputation and power. Therefore he is threatening them with the **„judgment of God“** and quotes, just like Jude in his epistle, suitable examples from the old-testament like the **fall of angels** (Jude 4), **the flood** (Jud. 5) and **Sodom and Gomora** (Jude 6). Peter also uses the example of the downfall of the **desert people**“ (1. Petr. 3,2) instead of the flood.

Peter only implies the sin of the angels in comparison to Jud. 6. The plastic depiction of the punishment reveals closer knowledge of the apocryphical traditions even though the author is trying to conceal it, perhaps because they were not officially included in the collections of the bible and were even considered heretical. Instead of retention with **»eternal chains in darkness«** he speaks of **»dark caves«** in an underworld in which the sinners, the poor fallen angels, are **banned**, respectively will be banned. After that he identifies the subterrestrial place of punishment of the disobedient angels. **Important about this is that even angels will not be spared by God.**

The author of the 2nd Epistle of Peter mentions the flood as the second example (Gen 7 / 1. Petr. 3,20 / Jud. 5), which he repeats in 2nd Pet. 3,6. **God did not spare the old world.** In this event with the **»old world«** not only humans and animals but also **heaven and earth** are destroyed. It understands the flood as a catastrophe with cosmic scales which would make the world after Noah already a second one.

The universal apocalypse also demonstrates God's righteousness because all unteachable unbelievers were destroyed, but the righteous Noah and seven like-minded people from his family were saved (Gen. 7,1; 8,18 / 1. Petr. 3,20). As **»preacher of righteousness«** Noah is only mentioned in the late Jewish traditions, which are Jewish scriptures from the time of exile to Babylon.

As a last example the author introduces the destiny of **„Sodom and Gomorrha“**(comp. Jud. 7), but without account of the reason for the **judgment of fire** like it can be read in Jud. 7_nachzulesen ist. Instead of an **eternal fire** (Jud. 7) the author speaks of a **»cremation«** of the wicked cities as a warning sign of God to all wicked people in the future. But the author also wants to contrast the wonderful salvation of the righteous. Just like **Noah** escaped the flood, the righteous **Lot** was saved by God from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrha. And that happened even though the bible presents Lot in Genesis as a very questionable character and the rabbis even called Lot wicked and a traitor of God because he was in the city government and obviously tolerated everything that was done in the city.

In the Apocrypha Wisdom 10,6 Lot is even called **„righteous“** and placed on the same level as Noah, Abraham and many other great heroes of faith. This kind of judgment is just, according to the author, because **Lot** had to endure the wicked doings of the Sodomites day by day. Since he had to watch and hear them everyday he had to suffer on the inside (Gen. 19,4). The author establishes the theory that the divine power and strength of God can save all **who fear God** from any temptation while He spares the unrighteous for the day of judgment.

The »**temptation**« is only regarded as a passing affliction of the believer in the final battle on earth during the Last Days (comp. Rev 3,10 / Mt. 6,13).

The **judgment of God** will especially fall on those who are guilty of the things the author now starts to list. And he is mainly referring to the false teachers and their inappropriate attitude in which they live against their nature or extravagantly (comp. Jud. 7 – 8).

The sin of the people before the flood and that of the **Sodomites** was a »**following after the other flesh**«. This is referring to a Jud. 7 and 8. But what does it mean? Was it referring to „**sex with the same sex**“? Was it unbridled in every aspect? It certainly lacks clear indication as to what it means. „To follow after different flesh“ is a typical Jewish terminology. It means to follow false doctrines (as in Mark. 1,17). Jesus is metaphorically the „**word Who became flesh**“. Therefore someone who follows another Master but Jesus is following also a different flesh.

All heresies tend to put emphasis on the here and now than the hereafter. The heretics are blamed for disregarding the „**authoritative power**“. The author means the power of God, resp. Jesus and not some human authority. They are called „**insulting**“ or arrogant.

Satan also received his authority from God and it has not yet been taken away from him completely, because without the power of God nobody could resist him. The working of our adversary is still legal until he is ultimately judged by God in Jesus Christ, bound and chased away. For some reasons of wisdom and love God still allows him to be the „prince of this world“. Jesus still has to return once more to finally destroy Satan, evil and all adversaries of God. The first coming of Jesus was as our redeemer from sin, and the next time He will come as our redeemer from Satan.

The **heresies and insolences** of the false teachers are such, that even the mighty angels would dare to say about their fallen congener as they would do.

Not even the angels dared to speak so evil about the demons. They could easily bring forth a bad word about them, there are enough reasons, but they don't do it. Even Satan with all of his demons is not just someone. They are very mighty powers that originated from a divine source and are due a certain respect. Also we should have a certain respect for Satan and the power he was given. Therefore it is better not to curse out demons or satanic people. Satan can have his revenge quickly and harm us or deceive us badly (comp. Acts 19,14-16).

Please notice that if an angel does not dare to do it, how much less should I speak negatively about others, etc.

The author of the letter makes it clear, that the false teachers who claim with pride to obtain such deep insight into spiritual secrets, are only conceited and in truth have no idea what they are missing out on. With drastical words the author describes insolence and arrogance of the heretics (Jud. 9). Jude even describes them as „unreasonable animals“, in spite of all their spiritual activity as they were wandering astray (Jud. 10). This especially refers to their attributes „carnality“ and „vanity“.

Animals according to ancient understanding, were stupid and unreasonable. They were not able to talk because they had nothing to say, and only lived by God-determined laws instinctively. Many animals were apparently only created to be eaten or slaughtered, some for work, etc. Those spiritually confused people were therefore compared to animals without sound understanding. They had lost the superiority of their substance for which God originally created them. **The doctrine of evolution** gave birth to people who were spiritually blind like animals. If a man with spirit and soul rejects the reality of God and his own spirituality, he is threatened to fall down to the level of an animal.

A human is: -- with reference to the physical body - comparable to an animal.
 -- with reference to his soul - a divine spiritual being.

(2. Petr. 2,13 – 22) Peter is holding accountable the reckless heretics. He tells them that they are restlessly after the sin of people (people with mistakes, weaknesses, handicaps), and that only such unsteady people are an easy prey for them and such which are cursed by God. He also mentions the prophet **Bileam** (Numb. 31,16), who only prophesied for money. He blamed the false teachers for their greed and indulgence with which they tempt simple and unsuspecting people by means of empty promises and jugglery. He also claimed that they only want to bind those to themselves and make them dependent of them, even practicing such things in the broad daylight (Is .5,11 / Eccl.10,16).

In addition the author reports that the eyes of those people were so **lustfull**, that they viewed every wife a potential adulteress because in actuality they were looking out for a woman who would be prepared to cheat on her husband. Furthermore their eyes were restlessly and greedily fixed on other sins.

Bileam for example, tried to **curse** Israel – he was not successful (Numb. 22) – that was the **way of Bileam**. Bileam also tried to **tempt** Israel – with success (Numb. 31,16) – that was the **teaching of Bileams**.

Bileam's way: (Numbers 22 - 24) What did Bileam do? The reward was tempting him. He even went to pray a second time. Was that necessary? No. He had already received his answer. The fact that he prayed anew showed that he did not want to listen to God and accept his divine message.

The conclusion therefore for us is: **To pray more than once for the same thing can be a sign of unbelief.** Heresy is not consequent. It does not give the creator, Lord and God all the honor, but the carnal, temporary and worldly still plays a big role.

Bileam is the father of all „heretics“, who have no shame to preach and prophesy for money. He even received attention from God in the form of humble rebuke by a mute and dumb animal (Numb. 22,22) which was supposed to keep him from cursing Israel and bring him back to his senses. This whole incident proved the foolishness or even insanity of this prophet.

The „**unsteady**“ people are perhaps new to the faith. „**New-born**“ or such who ignored the apostolic words as the word of God and remained immature believers. Because only as such half-hearted people they could fall for the heretic propaganda and go astray from the right and good way of God and become „**children of the curse again**“ (Is. 54,4 / Eph. 2,2 / Act.13,10) such as Kain and Korah. They went astray from the **straight path**, the safest and quickest path back to the heavenly home of God our Father (comp. 1. Sam. 12,23 / Ps. 107,7 / Hos. 14,9 / Pro. 2,13,15 / Act. 13,10).

The false teachers generally aimed at **immature and unstable souls, newly converted and young Christians** to seduce them with much success. Also hungry wolves would prefer lambs over sheep.

(2. Petr. 2,18 – 19) How do they tempt the „immature“? We have to consider that also mature Christians can fall back and become immature again (2. Petr. 3,17). They tempt their victims skilfully with lofty, sophisticated and tickeling, but totally vain sounds and words (comp. Rom 16,18). They spark their interest with sweet but empty promises and much confusion where they promise them strange and wrong freedom, instead of offering the most important – **freedom of sin** (Joh. 8,32).

It seems that Peter speaks to former believers who once were **born again** because they were already effectively purged from filth. They had escaped the stains of the worldly life (2. Petr. 2,20 – comp. also 1,4) and had turned their backs to the filthiness of this world. They had acknowledged and known the Lord Jesus as their Saviour (2. Petr. 2,20; 3,18 / Gal. 4,9). Through this recognition they were „**escapees**“, which means they had come away from the filth and dirt of the world (2. Petr. 2,20).

The term „**escape**“ was a typical ancient Christian „**term for conversion**“.

Another image for such heretics, respectively false teachers was the image of »**waterless clouds**« and »**dry wells**«. As a „**cloud without rain**“, which is tossed around by the wind, it does not help to produce the expected blessing of fruits.

These **two images are allusions** of the empty phrases and deceitful promises of such false teachers that only proved vain and empty in the end. Even though they promise great freedom to the audience, they turn out to tempt people into even greater slavery.

The **doctrine of freedom of the Gnostics** seemed to have a fascinating effect. Much related to the great appeal of very similar messages of esoteric teachers nowadays. This proves what the apostle Paul said about the Corinthian Gnostics: »**I can do all things**.« (comp. 1. Kor. 6,12ff.). But their arbitrary **perverted freedom** was and is in truth a more dangerous enslavement and extension of guilt (comp Rom. 6,17,20 / Joh. 8,34).

But actually all false teachers are enslaved themselves and are **trapped by dependency**.

The verse **2. Petr. 2,19** closes with a proverb-like statement which originated from ancient war regulations: „**The defeated is the slave of the winner**.“ Jesus put it this way: „If someone overthrows you, you will be the servant of the same“ (comp. Luk. 11,21 – 22 / Joh. 8,34).

The **true character of the false teacher** and apostate can be recognized by **their visible doing**, their overall behaviour. They, roughly said, act like **animals**, roll in the mud, wash dirty clothes... they like to discuss and accuse the mistakes of other people. They turn back to what they spit out, and eat it again like dogs.

The comparative images of „pig and dog“ are pointing to the nature of the man: The flesh does not will to be converted, and since it cannot do it it must be chastised by the Holy Spirit and the spiritual works we practice through Him.

The flesh is first of all unclean and carries spiritual uncleanness and fallenness for a very long time, even if you were born again.

The sinful **nature** of the old man is still hidden in all of our physical flesh. We feel like the apostle **Paul** once did. We all live like it says in Romans 7: „what a wretched man I am..“. We have to **„got to Romans 8“**, where it says now: „There is therefore no condemnation against those who are in Christ Jesus.“ Just like in an animal there is an impure nature, the old man is still in us and has to be renewed every day in order to become more and more like Christ.

And also the other way around, **when the believer does no longer work out his salvation and neglects it,** they will be falling back quickly (Hebr. 12,14 – 17). 2nd Peter is dealing with this issue. Also **Judas Ischariot** is an example for that (Mat. 10 / Joh. 6,70; 17,12). Just like we can freely turn to Jesus, we can also **turn away from Him again.**

A believer who stays with Jesus does not have to be afraid that he would be lost.

In Christ we are eternally safe and protected (Joh. 10,27ff.), because we believe in Him who will sustain us at all times and everywhere. God knows His sheep, those who believe in Him, and He also knows how to sustain them: just like **Noah and Lot** and many others (comp. 2. Petr. 2,9). However, this does not imply that there are no dangers for us.

Peter shows us that Christians can...

- ...stumble and fall (2. Petr. 1,10),
- ...become unsteady (2. Petr. 3,17)
- ...and be devoured by Satan (1. Petr. 5, 8).

But all of this can only happen to them when they come out of the protective zone of Jesus Christ.

A Christian is someone who is relying upon Jesus Christ. As long as he does nothing else and only devotes himself to and trusts in Jesus he cannot be lost because Jesus will hold Him.

(**2. Petr. 2,21**) Peter says it would have been better if the fallen heretics would not have found »**the way of righteousness**« and »**the holy commandments**«. In spite of OT Jewish origin of this terminology (comp. Job 24,13 / Pro. 8,20; 21,16 etc.) both are referring to Christianity which was eventually taught and enforced by the apostles.

Orthodoxy (»way of truth« Vers 2) and **Orthopraxy** (»way of righteousness«) belong together – according to the opinion of the author. The »**holy commandment**« is neither referring to the OT law (Rom. 7,12) nor the commandment of love (Joh. 13,34), but the **Christian apostolic moral order** (also 2. Petr. 3,2).

Chapter 3

The last chapter is dealing with **materialism**, the trust in the visible things instead of trusting the word of God which teaches us to expect the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with joy.

The Lord does not hasten His promised return, but practices longsuffering patience „*since He does not want anyone to be lost, but all to be saved*“. In His patience and longsuffering 1000 years are to Him like a day and 1 day as a 1000 years.

Peter is very convinced that **in spite of opposition** and apparent delay God's promises will be fulfilled. **The time until the return of the Lord is for us believers a time of hostility.** The church of Jesus was and will always again be tempted to forsake the word of God and Jesus. Therefore Peter calls all to adherence of **the messages of the OT prophets** and the **NT apostles** (2. Petr. 3,1 – 2).

Both parts of the holy scripture speak of Christ.

- ✓ The OT speaks of Christ through the prophets (Jh. 5,39).
- ✓ The NT speaks of Christ through the apostles.

Both prophesy that God will again intervene in our world.

- If someone questions Jesus Christ, he questions the word of God.
- If someone questions the word of God, he questions Jesus Christ.

Peter calls to watchful memory of the apostolic word of God in order to keep a „sound mind“.

It is very important to know – **God will always speak to our thoughts first and not so much our emotions.** The **thinking** as spiritual activity is the center of the soul. Emotions should follow your thinking as **thoughts in words** and not the other way around. In addition we should be able to discern between pure godly thoughts and natural human feelings. This is what the word of God does – it separates joints and marrow (Eph.6,17; Hebr.4,12).

The thinking of the Christian is cleansed by the word, because through free obedience toward the eternal truth we are **purged**. We have to be diligently watchful and keep it up, because our quick thinking can quickly go back to its unclean and poisoned way. Our thoughts are like lightning that come out of nowhere and are gone before we notice or can dismiss them.

Only by the help of the Holy Spirit of divine perfection within us we are able to consciously „care for our thoughts“, images and doctrines: not to receive them or to dismiss them and cleanse ourselves with the word of God.

As spiritual beings we should firstly „**consider**“ the Holy Spirit in our heart and meditate on it and spiritually unlock it (like Mary in Luk. 2,19). The life – and power-giving word of God should be the daily bread our heart, soul and spirit. Whoever experiences the great, deep joy and fulfillment while reading and spiritual absorption of divine truth in his heart, will not want to miss his heavenly bread no matter how severe the hostility. Each Christian should be able to feed his soul daily with the word of God.

Some Christians find that they have no more spiritual power. A decisive cause is usually that they are **spiritually malnourished**. Peter said that we should read the word of God often and take a lot of time and quietness to „meditate“ about it.

The more acquainted we are with the good and true word of God, the faster we remember them in the right moment when we need it and it is necessary to „**memorize**“ them. This is how a „**logos**“ **word becomes a „rhema**“ **word**. To meditate about the word of God and to „**memorize**“ it means that we do not let go of the good and true with our heart, but always to recall the love and light of God in Jesus... over and over again with earnesty. Repetition is the mother of studying. Repetition and practice produce skill.

(2. Petr. 3,1 – 13) Here the author catches up on the theme of Chapter 1. Different than in the previous chapter which it assumes the existence of the Epistle of Jude and the verses 3,1 – 13 have an argumentative character and are independent of Jude, except for verse 2.

This chapter is again **polemically aiming at liars against Parousia**, but the author is diligent to justify and defend the Christian hope of Christ's return.

After mentioning a **first letter**, which the author claims to have written (Vers 1), he characterises it by the statements of Jud. 17 as an important exhortation regarding the precious words of the prophets and apostles and to keep them in **mind** constantly (Vers 2). But especially he reminds us of the importance of the prophecies of the mockers in the Last Days (Vers 3).

He presents 4 arguments to oppose the doubts of Christ's return:

1. There has already been an apocalypse and re-creation of the world (Vers 5 – 7).
2. God has a different understanding of time (Vers 8).
3. The delay is not a delay but a sign of God's patience (Vers 9).
4. The day of the Lord will come like a thief (Vers 10a).

The words of **2. Petr. 3,10b** describe how and the statement of verse 11 draws out **the conclusion** for the right attitude of faithful Christians which could advance the 2nd coming of the Lord (Verse 12a).

Because true devotion and the holiness of the saints would even advance the course of events **in a world catastrophe** (Vers 12b) and draw near the new heaven and earth by their great love of God (Verse 13). The readers are at first reminded of the words of the » prophets« (comp. 2. Petr. 1,20ff.). We especially have to think of the prophetic promises of the »**Day of the Lord**« and other eschatological prophecies. Secondly the command of the Lord which was given by the apostles was mentioned. This was viewed in alignment with the prophetic testimony which also affirms the eschatological hope.

Therefore three authorities stand for the Parousia, the 2nd coming of Jesus:

1. The **Lord** Himself.
2. His **prophets**.
3. His **apostles**.

Significant is only what the apostles believed and taught. Their convictions determine the New Testamental hope of the believers. The uniform expectation of the apostles, that the Lord would not come before a **total apostasy** (and not the great revival) has taken place and the mentioned Anti-Christ has publically revealed Himself.

Therewith the author **curbs** the **euphorical expectation of a soon coming of Jesus**. It gives an explanation for the long delay of His second coming. He opposes any other interpretation of the Parousia, because for him it is clear that there has to be a time of „**apostasy**“ before that.

This thesis is undermined by the argument that since **the beginning of creation** God had planned it that way and nothing has changed. From this point of view everything remained the same since the world began. The author reminds the readers, that there has already been **an apocalypse and a re-creation of the world** – which was after the flood. The non-verbal conclusion is: **Therefore also this present world shall pass away**. Also in the scriptures Mt. 24,37 - 39 and Lk. 17,26 - 29 the **flood and Parousia** are compared to each other. »**In the life of Adam and Eve**« it explicitly speaks **of a second apocalypse**: »Because of your transgressions the Lord will bring upon you the judgment of His wrath, **firstly** with water and then **secondly** with fire«. Therefore the **author rejects the reproach of deception and fraud** (Luk. 1,55 / Joh. 6,31 / Rom. 9,5 / Hebr. 1,1). The author clearly states that nobody waits for the return of the Lord in vain. Not even if you physically die before it happens.

(2. Petr. 3,3 – 4) Immediately before the return of Jesus the mockers will appear, who will **deny** His return. The Anti-Christ himself will be a great **mocker** (Rev. 13,5 – 7; 16,9,11). False teachers are often **sarcastic**. This is a very smart form of deception. When Jesus was crucified **He was mocked and despised during that time** (Mat. 20,19; 27,29 – 31 / Mark. 10,34 / Luk. 18,32 / Ps. 69; 22,5). And so it will be similar when He comes back to earth.

False teachers often start with a **provocative question**, just like the devil did with Eve: „Should this be what God said?“and sow doubts into our hearts. „**where is the promise of His return and His presence?**“ This is false questioning and more than just a provocation.

The arguments and reproaches of the mockers usually refer to the fact that nothing really changed since the creation and that nothing will ever really change. Peter's answer is (2. Petr. 7,10 – 13), **that heaven and earth shall pass away**. When Christ returns something will change: the **visible Kingdom of God will be manifested**. When Jesus returns there will be **great changes in creation**, in **nature** (earth quakes, climate, sea, etc) and **cosmos**(sun, moon, stars) (comp. Rev. 16,20; 6,1ff.).

(2. Petr. 3,4) The doubts and heresies always come when the bible is falsely interpreted, based on letters whose interpretation some special people connect with some special events. The mockers and deniers of the Christian eschatology posed the sceptical question: „**Where is...**?“ (comp. Ps. 42,4,11 / Jer. 17,15 / Mal. 2,17 / Joel. 2,17).

But Jesus already prophesied that the „**gates of hell**“ will not overthrow or destroy His church and that this „**generation**“ will not perish until everything is fulfilled (Mark. 13,30). It does not refer to a living „**generation**“, but of a „**people**“ in general, which means the **followers of Jesus**, which is the church of Jesus, which are the people of God in the New Testament (1.Thes.4,15 -17 / 1. Cor. 15,51 – 53).

The „**trumpet**“ belongs to the imagery of God's revelation in general (Ex. 19,16,19 / Mat. 24,31 / 1.Thes. 4,16). It marks the phases of the Last Days according to the plan of God (Rev. 8,6 -11,19). **With the trumpet blow** the special revelation of God, the soteriology of salvation, started and it will also be finished at the sound of trumpets. **Our redemption**, our true spiritual – divine salvation is naturally not in people like the fathers of Israel, the apostles or other great personalities, but in our God Himself and His eternally holy and sovereign actions.

(2. Petr. 3,6,7) The „current heaven“ and „earth“ are so to say a **something in between** the first world (in the very beginning) and the new earth (which is to come) But yet both exist through the same „word“ that caused the **first creation** and the **first apocalypse**. The word of God is also a means through which the **present world** is kept for the day of judgment.

(2. Petr. 3,7) Fire will destroy the earth. The reappearing imagination of a **forest fire** has numerous parallels with the perceptions of Judaism as in the **Jewish apocalypses** and in the **Qumran-texts** and so on, as well as also the Greek-Roman philosophy. It is a doctrine that speaks of **recurring global burning and apocalypse**. The ideas of recurring floods and fire originated from the Babylonians.

This wide-spread **mythological motive of ideology** is also referred to by Peter, whereas he is not pointing to natural catastrophes but the **judgment** of the unteachable, unbelieving people (2. Petr. 2,5ff.).

(**2. Petr. 3,8**) When he then comes to talk about the return of Jesus and the „**delay thereof**“ the author points out that God sets crucially different **measures of time** than people would. God works totally different than we would (Ps. 90,4). In order to understand God's plan for / of time our human understanding of time is not helpful. This argumentation of the author addresses the problem of the „**impatient expectation**“ . God Himself will determine the day and the hour when He will fulfill His plan. All other information would be untruthful.

Peter does not only deal with **Parousia**, the 2nd coming of Jesus, but also the „false timely expectation“ of His **return** and questions this attitude. The fact that Christ would return was not so much of a deal, but rather the **nervous, doubting expectation**. For a better understanding Peter gives them indications on „**how**“ this will be like. **The heavens will pass away**(comp. Mk. 13,31 / Rev. 21,1) with clatter and hissing which could point to a world fire according to verse 7 and 12.

(**2. Petr. 3,9**) Also the church obviously suffered from the „**delay of Parousia**. **Until then everything happened so quickly** - Jesus **rose and ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came down** and the **church grew** rapidly. Therefore they sold and gave away everything in the beginning because they thought it is all coming to an end quickly now **and the prophesied return of Jesus was at hand**. But when this rapid development of events did not continue at the same pace, massive persecutions took place and the churches were scattered. Many Christians in Jerusalem were poor because of those events.

Therefore for my the „**delay of parousia**“ turned into a real problem. Not to mention the permanent mocking of the ones in denial of Parousia and the unbelievers. Peter calls out „**God's patience**“ as the true reason for the delay. That which looks like hesitation is in truth **divine patience, grace, mercy and long – suffering** (comp.Ex. 34,6/ Ps. 103,8), which will execute the necessary judgment, but wants to push it back as far as possible (comp. Rom. 9,22) to provide more precious time and possibilities of repentance. Because of His eternal love He wants all to turn back and come home, especially those who truly love Him, especially all real Christians. It is His will that not one would perish (2. Petr. 2,1ff.; 3,7,16).

God's long-suffering always aims at coming back, repentance, return of all lost ones – back into His heavenly kingdom without pain and torture (comp. Rom. 2,4). Jesus Himself suggested **the delay** many times, for example in the parable of the smart and the foolish virgins (Mat. 25,5) and the image of the bridegroom.

(**2. Petr. 3,10**) **The day of the Lord comes like a thief**. Always then when it is about the return of Jesus and the exact „when“, the old Christian metaphor „...**like a thief**...“ comes up. This strong parable is that of a quietly and secretly coming thief. The suddenness, abruptness and unexpectedness of the coming (Mat. 24,43 /; Luk. 12,39 / Rev. 3,3 ; 1 615 / 1. Thes. 5,2).

This „**thief**“ with his abrupt coming is just as unexpected to take away all of our material possession. The passing by of the **world** refers to the vanity of the human works performed or created therein (comp. Rev. 16,20; 18,21; 20,11). All the work of men will be destroyed by the power of God and literally made to nothing. The earth will be healed and restored to the way it was in the beginning when God created it and it will be even more beautiful.

(**2. Petr. 3, 11 – 15**) This is an **exhortation to holiness**. When you know about the day of the Lord and how serious all of this is, then you automatically have to assume a new way of life and of behaviour. You would have to be more grateful, thankful and indeed live more consciously in the present (comp. 1. Petr. 4,7 – 11).

Such a **responsible way of life** can only be lived when you expect the Lord to return anytime. Peter uses a typical rabbinistic perception which teaches that **living by example in keeping the law** would advance the coming of the Messianic coming (comp. Act. 3,19ff.). This argumentation is very uncommon and is out of the ordinary of the common view in the New Testament.

And it is also such a strange term that describes what is supposed to be „**advanced**“. When you read the verse in detail then you see that it does not refer to the end of the world in the form of the apocalypse but **rather the wonderful manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of man here on earth** where all human works will be no more and there are only the works of God. **All existing works of this sinful world must go through the fire first**. All unuseful, wrong and harmful that is not of God, what God did not plant is uprooted and separated from each other. This applies to Jesus parable of the leaven which leavens the whole dough. The kingdom of God must be on the inside, in our hearts, our souls and in our spirits here on earth and all who will can fulfill the will of Jesus.

The author uses the OT promises and expectations of the Jews in Is.65,17, where a **universal new creation** is prophesied, in which the totality of all created things will be involved, also the spiritual heaven which is not only the hereafter: „Behold, I will make a new heaven and a new earth.“ (comp. Is. 66,22).

This prophetic promise is acknowledged by Judaism in two ways.

1. **Firstly** in the imagination of a renovation or restitution (restoration, substitute, where there is no radical end and no radical new creation, but a total change or transformation of the old world is hoped for, which denies the apocalypse. **We have to heed the prophetic word** until the day of the Lord is come and the divine morning star rises in our heart.

2. **Secondly** there are such texts which do not only consider a thorough renewal but a real apocalypsw where the world will be brought back to its original „chaos“ and then be brought to a fully **new creation** according to Rev. 21,1,5.

Both imaginations belong to the revelation of God and cannot be separated or excluded from each other.

The author remains in Jewish traditions and their interpretation in 2nd Peter 3,13: „...the new earth...the home of righteousness“. It refers to a place where there is a new righteous order according to the holy will of God (comp. Is. 32,16 – 18).

According to this statement of the bible **Jesus already came when He was born in Bethlehem**, and where now two or three gather in His name, there He is. Yes, He lives in us, the spiritual center of our heart, and that is the foundation of the great Christian hope (1. Thess. 4,17; 5,10 / 2. Cor. 13,4).

Jesus will return visibly to judge and disperse Satan, the causer of all evil for all times.

- The **first coming of Jesus** was purposed for our redemption and salvation. He came as the lamb and died for our sins on the cross of Golgotha.
- The **second coming of Jesus** is purposed for Satan, to consume him from this earth and destroy him in order to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is a fact, that the oldest Christian churches saw the start of the kingdom of God in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but erroneously expected a very soon return of Jesus **based on the conversation between Peter and Jesus**, when He told him how he would die. When Peter then asked: „**And what about these** (Joh. 21,19 – 21), and John?“ Jesus told Peter that he would die and not see Him return. Jesus also said, whoever believes in me will live **even if he died**.“ (Joh. 11,21 – 26). The life that Jesus gives us is a different life than we expect to live. And yet the desire to see Jesus return in power and glory while they are still alive (comp. Mk. 13,30 / 1. Tess. 4,15,17 / 1. Cor. 15,51ff.) is understandable from the human aspect. But **this was never the intention** for us. We are born to die. And even those who were taken into the rapture as witnesses had to return to earth and die (Joh. 11,25,26).

Every person who believes in Jesus and is born again already lives in a new phase of life. Therefore his own death and the „**expectation**“ of Jesus return should not be of interest to us. Through Jesus and faith in Him we are already changed (1. Cor. 15,51 – 53) and we are seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2,6 / Col. 1,13 – 20). **A believer** considers the resurrection of Jesus from death and the heavenly triumph as an already attained reality and lives in a manifested eschatology (doctrine of hope) in which the whole tension between the „present of salvation“ and the „future of salvation“ are united. In this sense in Christ all things that we expect are already contained and fulfilled. He is the one Whom God sent, performing the work of eternal salvation for the world through Jesus.

(**2. Petr. 3,13**) From here there is a clear breach in the reflection can be noticed. Peter **closes his characterization of the false teachers**. He again turns to his other concern of the letter with which he started in the beginning (2. Petr. 1,10,11; 1,19 – 21) and confronts the church with it more detailed. **It is about „eschatology“**, the expectation of the future based on the biblical texts.

Since the false teachers had confused the church with their proclamations, Peter wrote the **2ⁿ letter**. Therefore it is easy to understand that it had to be very different from the first one. **He only reminds** the church of what they already knew and heard – this can be acknowledged in the terminology: Don't you know...! (1. Cor. 15,1 / 1. Joh. 3,21 / 1. Thes. 4,9 - 12).

The apostolic exhortations first seek to rebuke the negative influences upon the believers which the heretics used to lead the flock of Christ astray (Joh. 10,1 – 10).

„**The mockers will appear in the Last Days**“, saying: „Where is the fulfillment of the prophecy?“ and „Where are the signs of the apocalyptic proclamations?“ or „Where is Jesus?“.

This is a critical **questioning** of the whole word of God. Whoever cannot believe the first verses of the OT referring to the creation in Genesis 1,1 will also not be able to fully believe the last verses of the NT (Rev. 21,18 – 21) which report of the coming new world of God.

The **unbelievers and bible critics** will view everything cynically and reject it with disbelief and mocking. With the "**delay**" of His day of return God in His love, grace and mercy gives us plenty of time to come back to Him. When the church observes her condition in this time of tribulation, the insecurity and the old desires that so easily consume us, we should be grateful that there is still some **time of grace** for us. Otherwise so many would be lost and not saved.

The day of the Lord will come. Peter only emphasizes that we do not ever know when this will happen. The day will come like a thief, which means that we don't know when. But rather unexpectedly and surprisingly. Our whole thinking therefore determines either a positive assurance or on the other hand insecurity (comp. Mt. 24,42 – 44).

In the reproach of the **„delay“** there lies a question of the impatient, who disrespectfully accuse God for His delay. But are all of you who yearn for the day of the Lord to come so soon really prepared and equipped for His coming?

(2. Petr. 3,14 – 18) The final exhortations. The **apologetics** (speech of defense) against the heretics and the error about their soon expectation of the Parousia is addressed by means of exhortation to the church. Peter calls them to a moral lifestyle and wants the church to understand the delay of the Lord's coming as an act of patience and grace of God which is good and profitable for us.

In the end of his letter Peter also shares an earnest warning to the believers which refers to **„difficult to interpret or easily wrong interpreted passages“** of the apostle Paul. He does not say that Paul was wrong, but only that the simple and uneducated hearers of these passages might misunderstand them and **perhaps misinterpret them**. This especially refers to the statements of the Parousia. He is also referring anew to the false teachers in general who all twisted the holy scripture to some degree. In everything that is hard to understand there is something that then might be misunderstood.

According to the opinion of the author of 2nd Peter the **Epistles of Paul** were **»twisted«**, which means falsely interpreted by the false teachers. Pseudo-exegists (the self-called interpreters) are mostly gentle and self-illiterate and unsteady. Their ignorance is not simply based on unteachability or unwillingness to learn. According to 2. Tim. 3,6ff. false teachers are even those who »learn all the time«. They are yet **unilluminated** because they learn the wrong things or do not go by the apostolic, God-revealed truths as they learn and study. Also the evaluation of being **»unsteady«** is not so much referring to their morals but rather do they lack a consistency in the divine truth concerning the church of Jesus and the word of God (comp. 2. Petr. 1,12 and 2,14). **All in all** they do not insist on the **correct doctrine** in their interpretation of the Epistles of Paul. Their exegesis is a threat to orthodoxy (the apostolic heritage and the tradition thereof).

And since the apostle Paul was so hard to understand they did not only interpret his epistles wrong but also all the **»other scriptures«**. They interpreted it all for their cause. This way even intensive, but false dealing with the word of God can lead people to destruction.

In this passage we can see that the author gives equal room to the gospels and the other writings of the Old and New Testament (comp. 1. Thes. 5,27). This kind of parallelism reveals to us that the letter was written during the time when the creation of the New Testament canon was already long in process and would soon become the normative of faith and life in the church.

Furthermore the author calls **apostle Paul a brother**. This **Paul** is called as co-participant of the covenant and apostolic co-worker (comp. Eph. 6,21 / Col. 4,7). It is certified to him that he is a Christian authority in charge who has something to say. He is honored with the following words: „He was given **»wisdom«**.“ It certifies him the correct apostolic theology in the sense of Christian orthodoxy (comp. 2. Petr. 1,21). The author underlined it by saying **„he also wrote to you«**, which means the whole church. Paul had produced apostolic teaching material that aligned with 2nd Peter. Therefore Peter does not oppose the Pauline letters but rather confirms them and uses them as a confirmation of theological unity of his own writing.

(2. Petr. 3,18) **With an exhortation to growing in grace and knowledge** the author returns to the beginning of his Epistle (2. Petr. 1,2) .

The **doxology** (praise) refers to **Christ Himself**, other than in the other apostolic Epistles (except for 2. Tim.4,18 / comp. i.e.1. Petr. 4,11). To Him belongs the future glory from now until the day of eternity, which means from the now of the present until the Parousia, the divine perfection of all things. Paul recalls the encouraging „Christian expectation of the future“ in order to finish his letter.

Test – Questions:

1. Why and for what reason was the 2nd Epistle of Peter written?
2. What is the purpose and goal of the content of the letter for the readers thereof?
3. Why is lack of knowledge so severe for the believers?
4. How can you recognize a false teacher?
5. Which false doctrines does the 2nd Epistle of Peter address?
6. When and how does is a false doctrine developed?
7. Which are the indicators of false teachings? How do you recognize heresy?
8. How should you handle a prophetic word?
9. What kind of person is a person that is not „strengthened“?
10. Which great life experience is Peter relying upon?
11. What are the foundations of true knowledge of God?
12. What did Peter think of his colleague Paul?
13. Why should we not curse or mock the devil or demons?
14. Why must Jesus return to this world?
15. Why is our faith so precious?
16. Who is an „elect“ and when do you become an elect?

Please send the answers to pastor@matutis.de

•or to the church bible school, PO box. 65 06 65, D-13306 Berlin

•or turn them in at the book table at the church.

If you would like to **obtain a degree (certificate) at the end** of the seminary, you need to answer the test questions at the end of each lesson and send or email it to us with your full name and address.

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Nest lesson – The Epistle of Jude

And now may the Lord bless you richly with your bible studies.

May prayers are with you.

Pastor Joh.W.Matutis