

# Partakers of God's Divine Nature

Written on: November 1, 2022

**Article by: Dave Knutson**

**T**he apostle Peter is one of the most familiar characters of the New Testament. The N.T. has a lot to say about him and of course he speaks for himself in the letters that he wrote. We admire his strengths and see ourselves in his weaknesses.

His parents called him Simon or Simeon – he was the son of Jonas. Jesus renamed him and in Greek he was Peter which came out in Aramaic as Kephas. Peter combined these, referring to himself II Pet. 1:1 as Simon Peter

He was from Bethsaida in Galilee. Before Jesus called him he was a fisherman along with his brother Andrew. These two sons of Jonas were among the first disciples that Jesus chose. When Jesus began his ministry, Peter was married & living in Capernaum

Peter is known to us for many things. He was the first to confess Jesus as the Christ, the son of the living God. Of course he turned right around and contradicted Jesus about dying on a cross...only to be rebuked. At Jesus' invitation, Peter stepped out of a fishing boat in the middle of a storm and at least for a time, walked upon the water. He appears prominently in all four of the N.T. gospels

Some say that Peter, James & John formed an inner circle around Jesus. Then again, the Lord may just have singled out the opinion leaders for special attention. Peter was both impetuous and outspoken. And on one occasion James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven – to destroy a village of Samaritans. They were natural leaders who needed to be reigned in.

Yet it was these three whom Jesus invited into the house of Jairus when he raised that man's daughter. Only they were with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Only these three went with Jesus further into Gethsemane on the night that he was arrested. Earlier that night, Peter claimed to love Jesus more than the other disciples. He promised to stand by him even if no one else did. But by the next day, he denied the lord 3 times, as Jesus predicted. Which is why, after rising from the dead, Jesus forgave him and restored him to a place of leadership with three separate affirmations (John 21)

After Jesus went back to heaven Peter emerged as the leader of the disciples. He took it upon himself to find a replacement for Judas in Acts 1. Jesus had given him the 'keys of the kingdom'.

And he exercised that role when he delivered the first gospel message on Pentecost, inviting people to enter God's kingdom (Acts 2:37-40).

Along with John, Peter used his gift of healing to cure a lame man at the Temple and then preached a sermon based on that miracle. Acts 3:1-26). They were arrested for this and put on trial before the Sanhedrin who beat them and forbid them to preach any

more about Jesus. But they did not back down nor did they stop preaching. (Acts 4:1-31).

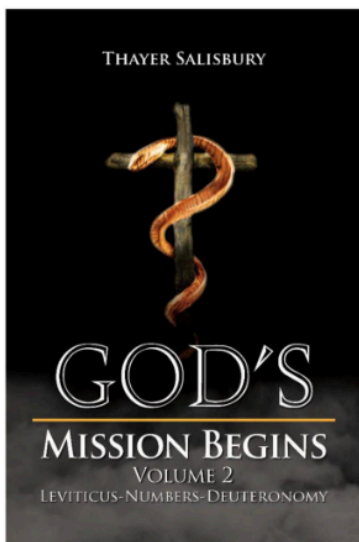
In Acts 5, It was Peter who condemned Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit and who were then put to death by God. This was perhaps the hardest thing that he ever had to do.

Some time later, Peter and John followed up on Philip's work in Samaria. He had a run-in with Simon the sorcerer, who thought he could buy his way into the apostolic circle. Peter warned him of God's wrath – in no uncertain terms and urged him to repent (Acts 8). From Samaria, Peter went on a mission trip up along the Mediterranean coast, stopping first at Lydda where he healed a man who lay paralyzed.

At Joppa Peter raised Tabitha from the dead and for a time stayed on in the house of Simon the tanner, where he had a vision. It was all about God accepting Gentiles into his kingdom. Just before that, an angel had appeared in Caesarea to a Cornelius and told him to send for Peter, who would tell him what he needed to do to be saved. All of which worked out so that Gentiles like us were invited into God's kingdom.

Back in Jerusalem, Peter and James the brother of John were arrested. King Agrippa had James executed... but an angel let Peter out of prison. So Peter left Judea to preach in other places

Following the first mission journey of Paul and Barnabas when there was a backlash among Jewish Christians, we find Peter back in Jerusalem to deal with it (Acts 15). He



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defended the evangelistic work that Paul and Barnabas had been doing and the churches that they had planted among the Gentiles. After all, Peter was there at the very beginning, when he converted Cornelius and that in turn was done at the direction of the Holy Spirit. Paul and Barnabas were also set aside for this work and carried it out with the Lord's authority (Acts 13:1-4)

Now at some point before this meeting in Jerusalem, Peter visited the church in Antioch. Paul called him on carpet for his on-again, off-again fellowship with the Gentile brothers. (Gal 2:11-14). To his credit, Peter repented and set an example for others.

He kind of disappears from the story after Acts 15, but the apostle Paul suggests that Peter worked outside of Palestine going forward. Writing in about AD 53-54 the apostle Paul raised this question in his letter to Corinth

“Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?” **(I Cor 9:5)**

So it seems that Peter traveled abroad outside of Palestine in the 10 year period from about AD 44-54 – that Paul refers to. And according to Church tradition – Peter eventually ended up in Rome

The church historian, Eusebius – tells us that Peter died in Rome when Nero persecuted the church (Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.25; 3.1).

### **Second Peter – the book and the message:**

This is the Peter who wrote the letters that we know as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter. And in this second letter, he was writing to churches in the northern part of Asia Minor...in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythina. I & II Peter were probably written at about the time that Nero's persecution in Rome was ramping up. Peter could see that dangerous times were coming...with persecution from the outside & subversion from the inside.

Peter's letters to these churches are all about *faithful Christian living*. They are about what Christians ought to do when faced death and deprivation for the faith. They are about being faithful...no matter what. And they are also about being sure, in the kind of way only possible when you trust what God has said in his word.

So let's see what it is as Peter says as he opens this letter and writes to us – just as much as he wrote to these brethren of ours– long ago and far away

Now Peter starts off with some very very encouraging words.

He wrote

“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”

Peter was a man of faith as were all of the apostles. They had been with Jesus through his ministry and qualified to be His witnesses. There had not a single doubt in their minds that Jesus was the Son of God.

Yet Peter dares to write to Christians in north-Asia Minor and ascribe to them the same kind of faith that the apostles had. In other words...it's not just the apostles who can have an apostolic faith. God offers it to ordinary people like you and me, which is amazing. That our faith in Jesus...has equal standing with theirs... before God, is the best news possible.

Now the noun – faith – does not have the definite article. This is not ‘the faith, delivered once for all to the saints’. It is not a body of revealed truth. It is the other kind of faith... it is trust in God based on belief in him. It is our response to Jesus and to the truth about him.

So, in the same way that the apostles believed in Jesus and entrusted their souls to his keeping, you and I may do the same. Jesus foresaw this, when he said to Thomas: “Because you have seen Me, have you *now* believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed.” (Jo. 20:29)

Now Peter says that we have obtained this faith – in – or by – the righteousness of our God and saviour Jesus Christ. In other words, God is fair. He does not offer faith to one and withhold it from another. God is righteous. He is no respecter of persons. Which is why you and I can qualitatively have the same kind of faith that the apostles had, along with a righteousness before God, equal to theirs.

Now did you notice how Peter referred to Jesus? He is two things to us. He is our saviour and he is our God. Jesus did not stop being God when he became a man in order to become our saviour.

As the Hebrew writer puts it in chapter 2:14-17

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help



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to the descendant of Abraham. Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Jesus did not become an angel to save angels. He became a descendant of Abraham. He participated fully in our humanity and died for our sins. It seems that God could not save what God had not become. His sacrifice on our behalf was offered 'in kind'. Therefore He took upon himself our flesh and blood. The incarnation was both real and necessary. He became a man to save men and women. And now he represents us in the presence of God...as our advocate and high priest.

So Jesus is both our God and Saviour. And based on that, Peter confers a blessing on his readers.

"May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"

Now there is a sense in which every Christian enjoys grace and peace. If you are a Christian, then God has saved you by his grace. You have accepted his gift and become the object of his love, and you are now on peaceful terms with him.

But there is also a way for grace and peace to grow. Peter says, that it is knowledge that makes them grow. The more we know about God – the more we understand about grace. And as we experience God's grace in our lives, we grow in peace.

The world that we live in makes sense to God. He knows why he made it. He understands where history is going. And there is a divine economy at work, both in the world 'out there' and in our lives.

The good news is that God wants the world to make sense to us as well. He wants us to understand who He is. and to understand his ways. He wants us to know our place in his divine plan and to take our place in that plan

God knows that we cannot survive in an absurd world. We need a world-view that makes sense, one that measures up to the world of our senses. Because, the God who has framed the world, also designed our minds to function in that world

Now in our case, there is a second dimension to God's work. He has combined two things when he made us. We are made up of a physical body and a non physical spirit. It is our spirits then that correspond to God's spiritual realm. For that reason, God has designed our minds so that we can conceive of and come to understand both realities.

It's not enough just to dig into the mechanics of a physical world. Scientific discoveries do not shed light upon spiritual truth, nor can they satisfy the spiritual longings of our souls.

We need more. And God has made us so that we must have more. If we do not find it, we despair.

That is so, because God has ultimately made us for a place beyond time. He has made us for himself, and we'll find no rest until we are with him.

That's what Peter was talking about when he indicated that knowledge from God is front and center. God invites us to think his thoughts...to ponder his world from the perspective of his divine purpose. To comprehend and to appreciate his grace. And then to live at peace with him and enjoy that blessings of that peace

Our saviour ministers to the whole person. He is the God of our minds and the God of truth. So it is, that as we grow in our knowledge of God and of our saviour Jesus Christ, that grace and peace are replicated. God's knowledge enables grace and peace to fill every corner of our lives

Now Peter wants us to understand that there is a difference between true knowledge and the kind that is only pretending. *True knowledge* is the kind that comes from God. But it is fair to ask: "how has it come to us – from God?"

Peter answers that in verse 3 when he says:

...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

The 'us' in verse 3 refers back to the word 'ours' in verse 1. In Verse 1, "our faith" belongs to the apostles. So in verse 2, 'us' also refers to the apostles.

In other words, Jesus gave the apostles that special measure of knowledge that he promised. He promised to send the Holy Spirit who would give them total recall and lead them into all the truth.

They would remember all of the things that he had ever taught. And God's Spirit would teach them everything that Jesus had not had time to reveal during his stay on earth. The apostles in turn were to share what God had taught them with the whole world

At the end of that revelatory process, Peter could say that – we now know everything



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that we need to know. We know how to enter into eternal life. We know how to live godly lives. And we know all of that because God has revealed it.

So, God revealed it, and what he revealed is that which Jesus made possible by his own glory & excellence. Glory and excellence sum up how it was that Jesus saved us.

The glory of Jesus is his deity. When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, God glorified him. When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, his divine glory became visible. His deity shone through to remove all doubt.

Jesus was God and is God, therefore the glory of God is His. Since His life is of infinite value, his sacrifice is able to save the whole world. In this way, Jesus has called us by his own glory...

He also called us by his excellence. Jesus lived a pure life – a sinless life filled with the positive righteousness of complete obedience. And that has qualified him to die for our sins.

God demanded nothing less than Glory & Excellence together. A person of infinite value...whose life was sinless & obedient. Glory and excellence all wrapped up in one man who was also God

Now all of this was done to bring about a single outcome. That you and I might become partakers of God's divine nature. That's what the promises of God are all about. And Peter is saying that now, God has kept those promises in Christ.

Or as the apostle Paul puts it in II Cor. 1:20

For as many as are the promises of God, in Him (Jesus) they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

So here we are: We have escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. God has lifted us out of that life and has given us a new one. And the result is...that death no longer has – the final word. We have started life all over again and it is truly a new life with God. It is the only kind of life to which we might attain, that has no end.

All of these things, God has done. He's expunged our sins and we are not guilty any more.

He's broken us out of the prison of our own making

He has cleaned us up from the inside out

He has infused us with his own nature by joined us to himself in order to make us holy.

That is who we now are. And because we now partake of God's nature, God expects the best. He demands it...that we grow up into that same divine nature that is ours through union with Him.

May God who dwells in each of us have his way. May we see and believe that we are new and righteous and holy. And may we choose to be what God has made us to be... by his grace

Barrie ON

# Growing in the Knowledge of our Lord

Article by: Kevin Hunter

**W**e know that we are saved by God's grace and that his divine power trains us and teaches us to grow in our knowledge of him. However, the Lord doesn't force this upon us. We have the choice to actively partake of his divine nature – we have the choice to willingly submit to the transforming power of the Spirit – we have the choice to eagerly deepen our intimacy with Jesus Christ our Lord, to grow in our knowledge of him.

Peter gives us several qualities to work on. In one sense Peter is commanding that we build on our faith with each subsequent quality, but on the other hand we need to work on developing all these qualities simultaneously. We do this not only because we long to abound in grace and peace, but also because we still live in the realm of a corrupt world that acts as a hindrance to the glory that is ours in Christ Jesus.

*2 Peter 1:5-7 – For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.*

- 1. Let us make every effort to add to our faith virtue (choose to do what is right)**


We stand before our heavenly father as his beloved children because we have accepted his gift of love through faith in Jesus Christ – At baptism, we joined into communion with



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God – His Spirit came to live in us – it was the beginning of our marriage commitment with Christ – to have and to hold – in sickness and in health – for richer or poorer – totally committed – not just words during a beautiful wedding ceremony, but faithful living from that day on and forevermore.

Moral excellence or virtue as the ESV renders it – is about living out our commitment – truly submitting to Christ as Lord of our lives – obeying his word and choosing to do what is right.

**2. Let us make every effort to add to our moral excellence knowledge (learn God's word)**

The Greek word used here for knowledge is *gnosis*. Used in our context it is to know spiritual truth – to understand the wisdom taught by God. This is not the same word used earlier in the text when Peter prayed that believers would multiply in grace and peace through the knowledge of God and Christ. That word is *epignosis* and it has to

do with having an intimate knowledge or participation with the subject, in this case, our Lord.

Growing in the knowledge (*epignosis*) of our Lord requires that we live by a faith that produces moral excellence, and that we embrace God's desire for us to keep on learning. How can we *know* how to please God unless we *learn* how to please God. And God has not left us wondering – he's given us words to live by.

**3. Let us make every effort to add to our knowledge self-control (learn wise discipline)**

As we learn from God's word it quickly becomes evident that discipline is paramount.

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The tongue is a small member of our body but it could be like a spark that sets a forest ablaze or it could be like a rudder guiding a huge ship – the difference is discipline or self-control.

Self-control is the application of wisdom over willpower. We do not put ourselves right in the midst of something that tempts us and rely on willpower to overcome the temptation – No, we steer clear. Does the person that struggles with alcohol addiction go to the bar and rely on willpower not to take a drink or does he steer clear of the bar altogether? Learning God's wisdom we apply self-control now, before we are in the midst of a burning inferno.

**4. Let us make every effort to add to our self-control steadfastness (develop patient endurance)**

Temptations to sin will come even when we steer clear and we may at times feel overwhelmed by evil – but we have not come this far to give up now – and we have not come this far to only come this far – God is not done with us yet. He wants us to grow in our knowledge of him – to experience his grace – to keep going – be steadfast – to develop patient endurance.

With our eyes fixed on Jesus – we run with endurance the race that is set before us – When we begin to sink we call out to Jesus and he saves us from our doubts. When we feel anxious, we cast our cares on Jesus because we know he cares for us – We do not give up – we endure – God is on our side.

**5. Let us make every effort to add to our steadfastness godliness (Christ-likeness)**

Isn't Jesus the greatest man that ever lived? He was God in the flesh, but he was fully human like you and I. The words that Jesus spoke were the very words he heard from his father – the actions Jesus performed were the very actions God intended for him to perform.

If we truly want to honour Jesus Christ our Lord, then we will follow him – we will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Where Jesus would go, we will go – what Jesus would say, we will say – move for move – thought for thought – my life's journey is about becoming less and less like the people of the world and more and more like Christ – less and less of my selfish desires and more and more of his godly desires.

**6. Let us make every effort to add to our godliness brotherly affection (love our church family)**

The training ground for godliness is within the family of God. Jesus loved his twelve apostles and although they came from different backgrounds he spent much of his earthly ministry teaching them to love one another. In fact, that was his overarching command to them.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Godliness is never attained if we don't make every effort to love the brotherhood of believers – how can we love God who we do not see if we cannot love the brethren we do see?

**7. Let us make every effort to add to our brotherly affection love (Sacrificial love even for those who hate us)**

We know Jesus words in the sermon on the mount – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love you neighbour and hate your enemies.’ But I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your father who is in heaven.”

If we want to be true to our identity in Christ – children of God – we ought to pursue loving others like Christ loved us (even when we were his enemies) – to love those who maybe even hate us – to walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

*2 Peter 1:8-11 – For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

You want to grow in your relationship with your Lord Jesus Christ. You want to abound in his grace and peace and to live a productive, fruitful life. So take to heart some of Peter's last words – let them impact the way you practice life.

**Let us make every effort to practice these qualities knowing that if we keep on practicing these God-given attributes we will never fall.**

That is the promise of God. God has saved us by his grace through our faith in Jesus Christ, but he has not saved us to stay as infants in the faith. He would have us continually growing in the knowledge of our Lord. He would have you make every effort to deepen your relationship with him – to walk hand-in-hand with your Lord into eternity.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy spirit be with you all.” (2 Cor. 13:14)

Brampton, ON

# My Departure Will Be Swift

Written on: November 1, 2022

**Article by: Tim Johnson**

**W**ith whatever time he had left, he was “always...ready to remind you of these things.” Did he have a year or two left, or just months? While He didn’t know exactly, he did know that his death was *imminent*. Jesus himself had told him this. Peter may have been referring to the Lord’s words in John 21:18-29, “signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God.” It is more likely the Lord had revealed a clearer timing for the apostle’s demise through other inspired messages. Peter knew death was coming soon and he took this final opportunity to encourage his brethren.

Notice how he viewed his current life in view of its upcoming end. He called it “this earthly dwelling” (v13-14). The word means “tabernacle” or “tent.” Paul used the same imagery in 2 Cor.5:1-2. When the Israelites came out of Egypt they lived in tents in the desert and struggled to carry the holy tabernacle as they went. This was temporary, for more permanent structures would be built when they reached the promised land. Peter viewed his earthly life as temporary in view of something greater to come. Death, then, is a matter of laying the temporary aside for something permanent and glorious, much like one would change out of work clothes for something nicer. God has greater things for us after death (see Phil.3:21). Peter didn’t see the end of life as something empty and frightening; he saw it as a transition to something much greater and wonderful. Further, in verse 15 he spoke of his *departure*. Using the word *exodus*, he again calls up the image of Israel taking the road out of Egypt towards the land of promise. The apostle thought of his death as taking the road out of this life into heavenly realms. Let’s be encouraged by Peter’s thoughts as all of us eventually approach the end of our lives on earth.

Having stated these things, Peter pointed out that he was determined in his final stretch of life to remind them of the need to “be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you” (v10). They already knew the truth. Peter pointed out they had been *established* in it, implying a settled and ongoing commitment to it. It was *present with them*, almost as if the truth was alive like a person among them. He expressed similar thoughts in 1 Peter 1:23 about “the living and abiding word of God.” They could lose its presence by neglect and unfruitfulness, which would be disastrous. So, he was determined to “stir you up by way of reminder” (v13). Most of us have many opportunities to be taught each week among brethren, and to be stirred up and reminded about the principles, commands and directions found in the word of God. This may seem tedious at times, but it reinforces the truth within our hearts as we go about living in this difficult world. We need it just as much as the people to whom Peter was writing. The mind is forgetful, the Bible is a large book, and we need regular reminders of the words of life.

Let’s also learn from Peter about the value of a purpose right to the end of our lives. Even though he was soon to face death, he “considered it right” to stir them up. He

repeats this in 3:1, “I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.” His body may have been failing him as he aged, but he was determined to fulfil his purpose until his dying breath. We, too, must find ways to serve our Lord until the end. The ways we can serve may change but serve we must. My father used to make intricate wooden 1930’s type cars and trucks with church kids on Wednesday nights after a short Bible lesson. Now adults, they prize these little marvels of engineering. But the time came when he could no longer do it, so to keep active he made phone calls to people to check up on them and encourage them. He was busy doing this right up to within a few weeks of his death. It’s what he could do, and he did it well.

Two thousand years later we benefit from Peter’s final recorded words written to stir us up and remind us. He was aware that through his final acts of diligence, “you may be able to call these things to mind.” What a great way to utilize our own final years of life on earth before our own departure: serving and reminding others.

I, too, have reminded us.

Barrie, ON

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# The Nature of Biblical Inspiration

Written on: November 1, 2022

**Article by: Thayer Salisbury**

“**A**ll scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). This means that the Bible comes from God. He used humans to write it, but he guided them so that they would write correctly. “For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21).

The idea that God guided the writers of the Bible is called “inspiration.” This is the word that is used in the King James Version at 2 Timothy 3:16. The KJV says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” All Bible students know that the Bible claims to be inspired by God, but not all Bible students agree about what this means.

## One View of Inspiration

To some Christians inspiration means that God gave the writers every word that they used. These believers think that there was no work involved for the human writer. Some even speak of the writers going into a trance and writing the books without even being aware of what they were doing. This is often called the “dictation view of inspiration.” This idea of inspiration is not correct. The Bible does not claim that God gave the human authors every word. Luke wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else. Luke does not claim that God gave him every word. In fact, Luke tells us that he had to study carefully to prepare the books he wrote.

Luke says,

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4, ESV)

This is not a claim that God gave him every word. Luke makes it clear that he had to study. God did not do all the work for him. If God had given each Bible writer every word, we would expect to find the vocabulary the same throughout the Bible. But we do not find that to be the case. Instead, each Bible writer was allowed to use his own vocabulary and style. God guided the writers, but he did not do all the work for them.

## Another View of Inspiration

Some Christians speak of inspiration but do not seem to mean that God really guided the writers. These people say that inspiration only means that God gave the writers a general idea and left them to work it out on their own. If this view of inspiration is correct, then we cannot believe the words of the Bible, but only the general ideas.



The Bible does not claim that God supplied every word of scripture, but it does claim that every word is reliable. In First Thessalonians 2:13 Paul tells his readers, “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word

*seek. serve. become.*



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of God, which is at work in you believers.” This statement makes it clear that the biblical writers were claiming clear, specific guidance from God. It was not just the general idea that was inspired. The full message could be trusted. Jesus had such faith in the accuracy of the scripture’s wording that he based a major teaching on the tense of a verb. In Matthew 22:23-33 he bases his teaching on the resurrection upon the fact that the scripture says “I am the God of Abraham...” rather than “I was the God of Abraham.” Such a point demands that we view the very words of scripture as guided by God.

## Inspiration Defined

The biblical claim of inspiration is not that God did all the work for the human authors. Nor is it a claim that only the general ideas were from God. Inspiration is the guidance of God that assures the truth of what is recorded without taking away the individual style, vocabulary, or point of view of the human author. It is God giving the human author all necessary aid without doing the entire job for him.

We should not expect every Bible writer to use the same words as the other writers. We should not think that God did all the work for the human authors. But we should read the Bible with a different attitude than we have when reading other books.

When we read human books, we stand above the book. We decide whether we should agree with it or not. When we read the Bible, we must allow the Bible to be above us. We are not to judge the Bible. We allow God, through the Bible, to judge us. This is not the right way to read other books, but it is the right way to read the Bible.

To be internally judged by the Bible we must understand what it is saying to us. Some people think that the Bible will always be very easy to understand. Others think that it is impossible to understand the Bible. We can understand the Bible; but it may not always be easy. God made the inspired writers work at the task of writing. He may also make us work at the task of understanding. He wants to be known by us. Yet those too lazy to study will never find him.

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# What is God Doing about Evil?

Written on: November 1, 2022

**Article by: Dave Knutson**

**T**hat is not a new question. Habakkuk said pretty much the same thing, way back when Israel was pagan. What he wanted to know was...

How long, O LORD, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, "Violence!" Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted. (Hab.1:1-4)

The prophet was saying, that our country is a mess. Bad people rule the day and the really bad ones own the night. So, Lord, why are you doing nothing? Are you always going to do nothing?

That is the question that Peter is answering here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2. And as it turns out, God has answered that question over and over. From way back before the world was created, God has been dealing with sin. He did it first in the heavenly places...and then again here on earth.

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter chapter one closes with a warning about false prophecy. Counterfeit messages have always competed with the real thing. Satan started the ball rolling and he is still at it, both in person and through his servants. So Peter gave us an advanced warning that still applies. In his day, false teachers were coming. They would deny that Jesus is our Saviour. And if he's not our saviour then he is also not our lord.

False prophets are all about what they can get. They want you to give them whatever they ask but have nothing to give in return. Nothing except their permission for you to do whatever you want.

Now they can't just up and say that Jesus is no longer the boss, without changing the basic message of the New Testament. So they part company with Biblical authority to introduce destructive heresies. They claim to be prophets sent from God, with a new and better gospel. They do it to control and exploit you. Their moral behaviour is so bad, that even non-believers are shocked.

Which brings us back to the question; what is God doing about it? Or as the man on the street puts it: 'what the hell is God doing?' To which, the bible answers – well, now that you mention it, hell is one of the things that God is doing about it. Hell is real, because the God who exists is entirely and eternally good. Because God is good, the consequences for evil are severe. And because God is eternal, the consequences are eternal as well.

Let me suggest then that verses 4 to the end of chapter are all about what God has done. And then chapter 3 is all about what God has yet to do.

By the way, when we get to chapter 3, part of the answer to our question is: God is giving the world more time because he doesn't want anyone to be lost. And he is using us to get that message out.

But chapter 2 is all about what God has done in the past. Because the past is a lot like what lies ahead. The trajectory of God's reaction to evil is unwavering – he is undeterred

Now what follows are a series of conditional sentences all beginning with the word if. Look at verses 4,5,6 & 7...and then there's the conclusion in verse 9.

When it comes to the wicked, Peter says: "...their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep".

The word for condemnation is krima...Its the word for verdict. In other words, God's verdict has not been idle. There is a final day of judgment, yet judgment actually begins, here and now

God is not asleep at the wheel. He is not on vacation nor is he oblivious. God not simply out there doing nothing. So what follows are examples of judgment and destruction beginning in space and time.

But Peter's point is that these are not merely point-in-time. Judgment is ongoing and destruction is having it's way as we speak. Evil people did not pass out of existence. They are still alive while punishment persists.

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Let's take a look at this series of conditional sentences. Peter says....If this and this and this and this is true, then here's the conclusion that follows.

Peter begins with angels, who as a matter of fact were the first to rebel. There was sin in heaven, before the clock started running on earth. Satan has been a rebel, right from the start of human history.

### **So Peter says of angels:**

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment

The word for hell is the Greek word Tartarus. This is the only place in the New Testament where the word is used. In Greek thought, Tartarus was the lower realm of the dead where departed spirits were punished.

Peter is not referring to hell...this is not a final place of punishment. He is talking about the place of detention...preparation for judgment. He describes this place as 'pits of nether gloom'. Tartarus is a dark place. It is a place without God and therefore without hope. It's the place where fallen angels are kept, until God's final judgment. God put them there when they sinned and they have been there ever since.

Of course, implicit in all of this is, that this is not what happens to good angels. But then 2<sup>nd</sup> peter is not written for angels.

Next in Peter's historical slide presentation, is the **generation of Noah**.

"...and (if He) did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly..."

Peter puts danger and deliverance side by side...because God distinguishes between good and bad. God does not treat the righteous as he does the unrighteous. The day of salvation for one is the day of destruction for another. Just like Noah, you and I are either preachers of righteousness or false prophets. Our lives are saying something. We either promote godliness or rebellion. Noah was a true prophet

Back in the day, you couldn't tell right from wrong, by counting noses. The majority was rarely righteous and Godly standards have never depended upon public opinion. This one godly man was right and the rest of the world was wrong. The majority has historically been wrong, because sinners have always outnumbered saints.

This is how bad things were in the days of Noah: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

People were bent on doing evil. They imagined it and wanted it so bad they could taste it. They got up out of bed every morning to do evil and never gave it a rest. So God acted. He wiped them from the face of the earth. Condemnation was universal and the population of the world drowned, while God preserved eight righteous souls.

Anytime that good and evil are next-door neighbors, good is in danger. Which is why God comes to the rescue. God is guilty of discrimination. He wiped out the wicked, and spared the righteous.

So, there appears to be a single order of justice...at work both in heaven and on earth. For God rules both.

And then Peter turns to Sodom and Gomorrah. (vs. 6-8). You have to wonder why people did not learn the lesson of the flood? They were all descended from Noah. I mean, what did this family talk about anyway? Was it just about how to design better life-jackets?

All the same...Peter writes

"...and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives

thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds)"

Sodom and Gomorrah have become bywords. The words sodomy and sodomites are still in our vocabulary. Sodom & Gomorrah have become synonyms for the most degrading forms of sexual sin. Sexual perversion, rape, violence. Pervasive lust and out of control human desire. These places have become symbols for the things that God calls, abominations.



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Peter says, that what happened to those cities must be understood as – God at work in history. Some were *guilty* while others *innocent*.

Like Lot. He was innocent. His righteous soul was tormented by what he saw and heard. And God rescued him from among them. When the cities went up in smoke, the angels saved Lot. God does not treat the innocent as he does the guilty.

But lest we miss the point...ideas have consequences. What we believe determines what we do. False prophecy plays a shell game with the truth. It distorts our view of God, claiming to lead us into his presence while making us objects of his wrath.

The Sodomites did not think that they were doing anything wrong. They were just fine with homosexuality. They practiced it and defended it. They promoted it with pride. When visited by angels from the presence of God, and right on the eve of their destruction, they demanded sexual access. They didn't even give up, after the angels of God used divine power to strike them blind

God's verdict was a never in doubt.

Now if God did all of those things...and he did, then here's the conclusion:

“then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority”

It's worth noting that the same God who rescues the godly keeps the unrighteous under punishment. The word 'keep' is the same verb as in verse 4, where God *keeps* disobedient angels in Tartarus. The unrighteous who are alive on earth and even now stand condemned. And those who have passed from this life are detained and being punished.

This is not idle talk. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:19 describes those spirits who are now in prison. They were disobedient back when Noah was building the ark. And they are still alive today – if you can call what they have, living. Living in the place of the dead and punished non-stop from moment to moment.

I think that what Peter wants to get through to us is, that ***life is always lived in the present tense***. Faithful Christians are saved right now. They are pleasing to God and death is not going to change that. But rebels are dead. They are dead men walking and separated from God. And physical death just makes that state of separation permanent.

Any way that you cut it, life can only be lived in the here and now. Which is why God's judgment is not idle. It's not just out there in the future. It is here and now.

Peter wanted to be crystal clear. This is the spiritual ugliness of sin, undressed. It is the polar opposite of the Christian virtues that he began with in chapter one. No wonder then that ungodly people despise authority. They are self-willed and headstrong. They don't respect God or the messengers of God. They do what only God has the right to do...when they condemn others, even telling angels to go to hell.



They're like animals, brute beasts who are driven by instinct. They curse and abuse what they do not understand. They have no shame. They party and carouse. They take pride in deception.

Peter uses a profound phrase that sums up their morality...“having eyes full of adultery...they never cease to sin”

They lust. They desire and never get enough. There is never enough wanting, nor ever enough getting. Which by the way, is the nature of sin. Sin is hardly ever, a one time thing. Sin mixed with lust and all baked together is *usually* a lifelong thing.

So Peter warns that these sinners target the weak and gullible. They hunt down unstable souls, often targeting those who have just been saved.

They are greedy. Life is all about what they want and not at all about what God wants. In this way, they bring themselves under the curse of God. They're like Balaam, a prophet of God...who sold out for a fist-full of dollars. Not even an angel could change his heart. And when God forbid him to curse Israel, Balaam taught the Moabites how to get

Israel to sin. In the end, 23,000 men died for one man's greed. It was spiritual madness for a prophet of God to so fully serve Satan

But he was just like, every other false prophet. Arrogant and vain. A slave of sin – promising what he could never give. False prophets know how to reel you in. They bait the hook with human desire and get you addicted to sensuality. This ancient world of sin and lust is the postmodern world all around us. It is still, sex-saturated and self-centred. It's all about me...and the only rule is that there are no rules.



*Get Down to Worship*  
By Tim Alexander

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**About the Author:**

Tim Alexander is a life-long Christian with a love for languages. He reads his Bible with an eye for getting away from human-made traditions and discovering the pure will of God. He works for a non-profit Christian organization and has had the opportunity to travel and speak in churches around the world.

Tim and his wife live in Beamsville, Ontario, Canada.

Peter has us imagine that we lost at sea. We pull out a sextant and take a reading on a planet, instead of a star. Or, imagine that you are dying of thirst. Exhausted, you drag yourself to an oasis only to find it dry. That's what its like to follow a false prophet. The only thing that they can guarantee is that you will stay forever lost and never get what your soul really needs. .

So back to our original question....what is God doing about them? Well, black darkness has been reserved for them and those who follow.

Let's remember that Peter is writing to Christians. The last 5 verses are all about selling out...about renouncing our faith.

Here's what that is like:

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.

It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire

*Conclusion:*

There actually is something worse than never being saved. Its being saved and then going back to being lost. It's having faith in Christ and knowing the assurance of being saved. It's knowing peace with God and love for your brother. It's about holding eternal life in your hands...and then letting it slip.

The reason that you are worse off is...that you been inoculated. God has no other plan of salvation. There is no other sacrifice for our sins. And if what you once had in Christ is not enough, then nothing ever *can* be enough...to save you again.

So let us hold onto what we have in Christ. For God has made us partakers of his divine nature. He will protect us from temptation and shelter us from harm.

Barrie ON

# “Looking for New Heavens and a New Earth”

Written on: November 1, 2022

**Article by: Paul Birston**

**T**he language of the Bible is very important for us to grasp. “New” means recently made, fresh, unused, unworn, superior to what they succeed. They are unprecedented and new in kind and substance. They are real.

While it’s restating the obvious, our common language frequently misses the fact these visions are not just about heaven. In them we see God’s new heavens *and* His new earth. John sees His new Jerusalem.

To carry away all doubt from our minds about the possibility of this just being a renovation of what we know now (a common false doctrine), John tells us clearly, “for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea no longer exists.” (Revelation 21:1)

God and the laws He created to govern the present universe inform us in the most minute detail that the present heavens and earth will wind down, run out of energy and end.

The overwhelming beauty and encouragement of God’s promise is: His new heavens and new earth will not end. There we will live forever with Him in His righteousness, light and glory.

## **God’s Promise of the New Heavens and the New Earth**

About 760–800 years before Peter and John wrote, Isaiah prophesied God would create new heavens and a new earth:

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. <sup>18</sup> But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, And her people for gladness. (Isaiah 65:17–18)

“For just as the new heavens and the new earth, Which I make, will endure before Me,” declares the LORD, “So will your descendants and your name endure.” (Isaiah 66:22)

## **God’s Promise Affirmed: How He Will Do It**

About 760 years after Isaiah’s prophecy, Peter affirmed God’s promise and magnified our understanding of how He will replace the first heavens and earth with the new.

Peter’s description of the human condition in the last days in which we live and the physical details are vivid, precise and encouraging.



“Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, <sup>4</sup> and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue just as they were from the beginning of creation.” <sup>7</sup> But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people.

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be found out. <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! <sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found spotless and blameless by Him, at peace, <sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation... (2 Peter 3:3–4, 7, 10–15)

We noted that the present universe will end. This is not in doubt. Peter says it will be destroyed by fire. The elements will burn up. His choice of words for elements is most helpful. It is the root of our word *stoichiometry*. Literally, it means the measure of the elements we are familiar with from chemistry. These are the elements God created and which are defined scientifically by the marvelous periodic table. Stoichiometry describes the relationships between reactants and/or products in a chemical reaction.

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All of the temporal elements God created He will destroy by fire so that He can replace them with them with eternal elements that last forever.

### **The Resurrection Body**

This new creative work of God is in perfect unison with another of His most magnificent miracles and promises: the resurrection body of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead.

Peter highlighted that we are headed to live in God's "new heaven and new earth where righteous dwells."

He said regarding God's timing and how we get there,

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.... regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

God made this salvation possible by Jesus' blood, death and resurrection, the gospel for our forgiveness and justification before God, the good message of our salvation Paul articulated,

For I make known to you brothers as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> and that He was buried, and that He was *raised on the third day according to the Scriptures*, <sup>5</sup> and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

God forgives us and justifies on the basis of Jesus' blood, death and resurrection.

All four Gospels proclaim the proof of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the reality of His new resurrection body (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 21-22).

Jesus vividly and concretely proves the reality of His resurrection body in Luke and John:

See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you plainly see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. <sup>41</sup> While they still could not believe it because of their joy and astonishment, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They served Him a piece of broiled fish; <sup>43</sup> and He took it and ate it in front of them. (Luke 24:39-42)

He said to Thomas, "Place your finger here, and see My hands; and take your hand and put it into My side; and do not continue in disbelief, but be a believer." (John 20:27)

Jesus \*said to them, "Come, have breakfast." None of the disciples ventured to inquire of Him, "Who are You?" knowing that it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish likewise. (John 21:12-13)

### **Our Resurrection Bodies Will Be Like His**

Jesus' is the first fruits of God's promise to resurrect His people (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Paul goes on to affirm the reality of every Christian's resurrection body:

Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.... <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:49, 52)

John tells us, “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him.” (1 John 3:2b)

God’s new heaven, new earth, new Jerusalem and new resurrection bodies of Jesus and His people are perfectly made for each other.

Consider how perfectly God made our bodies to live on this exquisite planet. Since God can make our bodies perfectly suited to live on this earth, He can certainly make our eternal resurrection bodies perfectly suited to live forever with Him in His new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem.

These truths about God’s new heaven, new earth and the new resurrection bodies of His people are vital to understand Isaiah’s, Peter’s and John’s visions. We see the fulfilment of God’s eternal purposes and how everything He has created and done through the First and New Covenants foreshadow the wonder of His new heaven, new earth and new Jerusalem.

As we labour with Him here, we keep our eyes on Him and the horizon of His glory, “looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13b).

Waterloo, Ontario

