
Into Thy Word Bible Study in 2 Peter

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2 Peter 2: 12-16: "The Characteristics of False Teachers!"

General idea: This passage gives the reason and point of why Peter attacks and wages war against false teachers. It is a main theme of his message. Peter is telling us that false teachers are like untamed, wild animals that only follow their instincts; they do not think about what they do, or care that what they do is harmful. Their arrogance is like that of a useless animal that is a danger to people and must be put to death to save others from harm. Like a wild animal, they only live to satisfy their own needs and pleasures. They seek to devour and feast on the unstable minds of others and their inability to discern, and do not care about real, authentic teaching. Most people seem to prefer the excitement of emotionalism or the self-help from a *Dr. Phil* type, and not the wisdom of God or the accountability and insights from the shepherding of a man grounded in God's Word. False teachers, in their lust for new nuances that are not true or seeking what is a lie over and against what is clearly revealed in Scripture as truth are foolish and harmful to others. By seeking evil and harm when God's call is to display excellence and correctness in teaching, they create chaos in His Church.

Vs. 12-13: False teachers are immoral and will be condemned! What gets the false teachers in more trouble is that they teach what they do not know, while claiming they do know, and they do not care that what they teach is wrong. They seek people who are allured by fantasy, emotionalism, or the lust of a new nuance that is not true.

- *Matters they do not understand* refers to seeking special knowledge and secrets for greater self-fulfillment that are so esoteric and illogical they do not make sense. This was the way it was in the early development of *Gnosticism*. It is ironic for those who sought knowledge by their arrogance because the knowledge they sought was completely absurd and showed them to be fools. This was also, of course, blasphemy to our Lord!
- *Like brute beasts*. This is a sarcastic insult condemning their irrational teachings and behaviors, which were like that of wild animals who are dangerous and worthless to commune with. They are only usable to hunt for food and destruction is their only future. The contrast is that people are to be reasoning beings, whereas animals are not able to think. They only have instinct. Stoic philosophers considered unreasoning humans to be as wild beasts.
- *Paid back with harm*. What you "dish out" will boomerang back to you. This is not the *karma* of Hinduism; rather, we reap what we sow—good or bad (Job 4:8; Psalm 126:5; Jer. 12:13; Hosea. 10:12; Luke 19:21; Rom. 6:21-23; 2 Cor.

9:6; Gal. 6:8-10).

- *Carouse in broad daylight* refers to the reveling associated with all-night pagan parties, and the corrupt practices that ruined empires, clans, and families. Sin is usually committed in the dark—at nighttime—which is why shady nightclubs and such places are always dark. Turn on the lights in such a place, then run in fear of your life, as the yelling and cursing will surely happen. People do not want to be found out for their sin. However, these people pursued their wickedness in the daylight and did not even care and about being found out. They flaunted sin unashamedly, showing themselves to be worse than the pagans. God calls us to good conduct and to self-control (Isa. 57:20; 1 Thess. 5:7).
- *In their pleasures* refers to self-indulgences—seeking to distort, connive, and manipulate others for one's own amusement or purpose. Being self-indulgent pushes God away by our refusal to acknowledge Him in all aspects of our lives, forsaking maturity for what is dangerous and corruptive. They were turning the holy observance of the Lord's Supper into a shameless nightclub scene of debauchery and sexual sin.
- *In their pleasures/their deceptions*. They were deceiving people, changing truth for a lie, and calling lust love. Thus, they were not promoting real love, rather lies and covetousness!
- *They feast with you* refers to the communion the Early Church did which was a shared meal and then a retelling of the Last Supper (Jude 12). The false teachers were making a parody of the Last Supper, diminishing its scope and value by perverting it and using it to entertain, connive, and as a “put down” to others (1 Cor. 10:14-17; 11:17-22, 27-34). There is also a Greek word play here where the word for pleasure and deception, *apatais*, is similar to the word for “love feast,” *apapais*. If not dealt with, these false teachers will feast on you and your church!

False teachers need to be revealed and dealt with swiftly. In Peter's time, they were proclaiming union with God and peace without worrying about sin, that there is no judgment, and that Christ is not coming back so we can do as we please with grace. This gets people excited and focused on things that are not in God's plan or purpose. Hence, He is ignored and the false prophet is lifted up. Twisting God's truths to fit our whims and to rationalize our sin is blatantly evil. Do not allow this in your church!

Vs. 14-16: Teaching what is clearly wrong or leading others in error is a disgrace to who Christ is and what He did for us. It betrays Christ, blasphemes Him, and is adultery to God. It mutes His precepts from those who are unwilling or unable to think about, research, or realize a truth from a lie. The sad thing about this is that the counterfeit teachers have nothing while thinking they have everything. In fact,

all the false teachers have is their judgment and destruction to look forward to unless they repent.

- *Eyes full of adultery* means “eyes full of adulterous women,” and refers to desire and seeking women for sin, always thinking about adulterous or “easy” women, and seeking to sin with them. This is unquenchable sensuality. One is so full of thinking about the opposite sex that there is no room for industrious pursuits or godly thinking. Hence, the importance of moral training is understood (Matt. 5:27-28)!
- *Seduce/entice* means ensnare by the means of deception, as in to hunt animals or to lure fish with bait to catch them. Here, it is tempting and enticing unbalanced, naïve, and unthinking people for evil desires. God calls us to practice moral strength so to not be enticed. A firm foundation of faith and trust in Christ will keep us from being enticed and being deceived. If not, we will be easy prey (James 1:14; 2 Pet. 1:12).
- *Experts/trained in greed*. *Expert* means having a heart or passion. Greed means self-indulgence, and implies the exercise and training of an athlete but not for sport. Rather, it is to pursue decadence and bad behaviors. They were literally teaching and training people for greed and debauchery, and personally profiting from their “disciples!” False teachers love sin and will rationalize that it is OK, and enticing others to sin also!
- *Accursed brood/children* means disinherited children who received a curse and not a blessing or inheritance because of their wicked acts or betrayal and/or refers to just being doomed, under a curse.
- *Balaam* was a Jewish proverbial saying for being foolish, seeking greed, and dishonorable character. Balaam was a Midianite and was a prophet of God. In the book of Numbers. His story was of one who sought riches and his desires over what God had gifted him with and the call to use the gifts appropriately. He became a mercenary of greed who enticed the Jews to sin and they were judged. He symbolizes gluttony and the seeking of evil, and was considered worse than an invading army. He was a man who wanted it both ways—God’s and his. Thus, he engaged in what was futile and foolish. Peter was using the most foolish person typified in the O.T to show how absurd and irrational the false teachers were. (Num. 22-25, 31:1 -18, especially 23:7; 24:5-9, 17; 25; 31:8-16; Deut. 23:4; Josh. 13:22; Micah 6:5; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14).
- *Rebuked*. Balaam was chastised for his insanity in choosing to pursue evil rather than what God had called. He knew better, yet he did not yield (2 Kings 9:11; Jer. 29:26).
- *Beast without speech/speechless donkey*. God directly opened the donkey’s

mouth, or perhaps he used the angel who possessed the donkey to speak to Balaam. The angel then stood in Balaam's way with a sword. Notice the ironic context of animals in this passage. Here, an animal is used to instruct a so-called wise man! The "ass" had more spiritual insight than this so-called Prophet. The angel and donkey only temporarily restrained Balaam, who then resorted to manipulation to get his unjust reward. The people in Peter's church were acting like animals; they sought what was forbidden, conniving and manipulating others for their personal gain and evil desires (Num. 22:27-35).

Balaam. He had the knowledge and some power from the One True God, yet he purposely allowed Balak to manipulate him with riches to curse the Israelites and bless the Midianites, which God had forbidden him to do. Balaam sought money over God's call and precepts and engaged his gifts for foolish gain, enticing the Israelites to evil. He played a dangerous game of deception and straddling the fence between God's ways and his faulty desires and lust. God had to use a donkey to talk to him as he refused to heed God and His ways. However, he still did not listen, and God was forced to constrain him to have him utter prophecies concerning the future of Israel and of His glory. Thus, He did bless the Israelites, but he also showed the Midianites how to get them by enticing them to sin with their women, which the Israelites soon did. Balaam's name went from meaning *a prophet of greatness* to being a reference to a feeble foreigner or glutton, a name of shame.

Balaam shows us we can choose our path in life. We have two paths we can take—the way of Balaam or the way of God. One leads to hell and destruction by our seeking foolishness. The other leads to eternity with Him by accepting the righteousness of Christ. There is no straddling the fence in the Kingdom of God. We can choose to be foolish or we can choose to be righteous. Which way will you choose? False teachers show their path, for they do not have good character. You will know them from the Fruit of Galatians 5:19-21 whereas a true teacher of God will personify the Fruit of Galatians 5:16-18, 22-23!

Do not let false teachers feast on the people in your church!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see [Inductive Bible Study](#)):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?

8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever been attacked or scared by a wild animal? How did you feel? How does this compare to listening or accepting false teaching?
2. Why do you suppose sin is usually preformed in the darkness? Can you give an example of exchanging truth for a lie?
3. Why do you suppose Peter states that false teachers basically are like untamed wild animals? How does arrogance play a part in false teaching?
4. How do misleading teachings and watering down the Word create chaos in His Church?
5. How have you seen false teachers devour and feast on people's inability to discern?
6. Why do some Christians prefer the excitement of emotionalism or the self-help teachings from a Dr. Phil type rather than the wisdom of God from a good Bible teacher?
7. What do you suppose the motivations are of someone who, like Balaam, causes another to seek evil and harm or desire his own way rather than His way? Do you understand the importance of good teaching done with excellence and correctness?
8. How does the desire to give people what they want to hear over what they need to hear affect your church?
9. What are some of the ways false teachers use to promote themselves or their false doctrines? How and why do they attract people? What would happen if your church screened its teachers and provided church discipline for those who teach falsehoods?
10. Why do false teachers need to be revealed and dealt with swiftly? How do Christians set themselves up as easy prey for false teachers? What happens when we think we may offend and thus take no action?
11. How can having accountability, good teaching insights, and the shepherding from people who are grounded in God's Word help spare your church from false teachings and going astray from God and His call? What can you and your church do to keep the church grounded in the Word?

12. What can you and your church do to stand up for virtue and morality, even when the community around you is disgusted by it? How can the commitment to model and teach God's Word clearly with good, self-controlled conduct prevent false teaching? So, what can you do about this?

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