



# CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

## SERIES V

### WISDOM LITERATURE AND NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

#### Lesson 29 Commentary 2 Peter

### PETER, SERVANT AND APOSTLE OF JESUS 2 Peter

#### INTRODUCTION

With such a welcome identification, and followed by a reference to us today: “to those who have been given a faith like ours,” we feel a glad response to hear Peter writing to us, but the early Church had reservations about its origins. However, it was common in those days to write in the name of a well-known writer, establishing a sort of affinity with the author and his message. One of the difficulties that the Church had came from statements in chapter three of the letter, with its efforts to lay to rest difficulties with the non-fulfillment of the Parousia, Christ’s Second Coming. This was not a problem during Peter’s life and ministry. Only later did Christians gradually realize that this would be in the more remote future.

In the letter itself, the writer cautions all that, while waiting for this, we realize “the Lord’s patience is directed toward salvation.” Perhaps our God, after abundant redemption nobly won by Christ, His Son, wants to fill eternal life after the Parousia with more and more numerous victories from earth. It would seem too few if only one or two generations benefited by that.

Today, scripture scholars have access to studies of the languages of the ancient world, that even from the vocabulary of a document they can detect the probable historical times, much like we can detect lines from Shakespeare, through his quite different vocabulary and speech patterns. This and the fact that there is a strong likeness to the thought and wording of Jude’s epistle, date it anywhere from the year 100 to 125 after Christ and a possible third or fourth generation Christian as its author.

Yet, it has some surprising references to Peter, as in such statements as “I shall press to have you recall these things frequently after my departure” (2 Peter 1:15).

#### I. QUALITIES OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN (2 Peter 1:3-11, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 John 1:7, 2:15)

**A. Christ’s Call (2 Peter 1:3-7).** Great and precious things have been brought to us through Jesus’ glory and power; genuine holiness can be ours. By living as a Christian, we flee from corruption, especially from a society given to lust as

was the pagan world around the empire, and sadly, is part of too many lives in our culture, and of our youth today.

In such atmosphere, “make every effort to undergird your virtue,” so that you develop the qualities that follow: faith, discernment, and self-control which leads to perseverance; devotion, kindness to all, and love. Thus, our growth in these qualities will prevent our knowledge of Christ being superficial and unproductive.

If we make them our own, we will never be lost and will be richly provided for when we enter the Kingdom. Here Peter mentions that he will recall these teachings often “as long as I live” (2 Peter 1:13). He knows that the day is close “when I must fold my tent” (2 Peter 1:14).

**B. The Apostle’s Witness (2 Peter 1:16-19, Luke 1:78-79).** Peter recalls his own eyewitness of Christ’s glory, and of his personal hearing of a voice coming out of the cloud as Jesus stood transfigured on a high mountain: “This is my son, my Beloved. Listen to him” (Mark 9:2-8). He speaks of the messages of the prophets that Jesus fulfilled, and encourages all who have heard the apostles’ teaching to keep all their attention upon it “until the morning star rises in your hearts” (Revelations 2:26-28).

## II. PROPHECY (2 Peter 1:20 - 2:1)

**A. Nature of Prophecy.** Prophecy is not anyone’s personal interpretation, nor anyone’s willing it. Here, we find the definition of prophecy: “Those impelled by the Holy Spirit speak under God’s influence” (2 Peter 1:21).

**B. False Prophets (2 Peter 2:1-3, 10; 3:3-4, Matthew 24:11).** As in the Old Testament, designing men preached and prophesied in a spirit of greed, encouraging great gifts of money for their ministry; they even deny some of Jesus’ teaching, as the gift of Christian freedom, they

teach that it includes lust, and they practice it, as part of Christian freedom. We have seen in our day accusations of some TV evangelists for these two false practices and sins.

**C. God’s Response to Them in the Past (2 Peter 2:4-7).** Peter points out that even the angels were not spared when they sinned; they were consigned to “pits of darkness” and are there until judgment. He brought down a flood on the sinful earth in Noah’s day (Genesis 6:5, 7:11b). He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25, 1 Corinthians 10:13).

These faithless Christians who “live of the flesh” and “despise authority,” engage in daytime revelry, are “constantly on the lookout for a woman, greedy, and look for dishonest gain” (2 Peter 2:13-16).

These were indeed serious problems for the Christians of that time, to have among them such erroneous and fallen members. Such can come to the Church at any time in history; we must be as those who read and observe such letters and Biblical books as we have studied. Yet, as in the days of the writer of this letter, evidently an authority, we, too, have authorities of the Church who evaluate and teach correct doctrine and practice for the modern age. When all around us are those who reject the Church’s teaching and find support of all too many who have once professed Christ, or have never had anything to do with a Christian Church, we can avoid a severe judgment. We must courageously live the teaching of the church which represents God on earth, and also defend its teaching.

This Chapter 2 of 2 Peter has numbers of verses that correlate closely with the Letter of Jude that scholars feel there must have been some relationship of dependence of one on the other or, at least, of a common source.

**D. God's Patience (2 Peter 3:1-8, Wisdom 11:13, Romans 12:33-36).** The lateness of this letter is understood by some when seeing the writer of sending these words "as reminders." Evidently, these people were evangelized quite earlier, and "preached to you by the Apostles" (2 Peter 3:2). The punishment reserved for the last age is "by God's word by fire." This is the only Scriptural passage speaking of fire as the destruction of the earth on the last day. At the time of this letter, this imagery was popular, having originated in Persia, and spread over the nations in that part of the world. Such imagery "does not necessarily involve acceptance of the scientific imagery of the imagery employed" (Jerome Biblical Commentary). Of course, God can use any means in His creation, to serve His purpose. The invention of the nuclear bomb in the years past have caused more speculation on the end of the world.

### III. FRESH CALL TO HOLINESS (2 Peter 3:11-18)

**A. The Day of the Lord.** Since this will be sudden, "what sort of people must you not be, even looking for it and trying to hasten it!" Since God wants none to perish but all to come to repentance, "be holy in your conduct and devotion" (2 Peter 3:11-12).

Are we looking for the Day of the Lord? Trying to hasten it? Should we not keep this in mind as we make life's plans, one which helps us choose one which does not endanger us if that day comes on us—"like a thief in the night," as Jesus said.

The Church has a season, that of Advent, which celebrates the three comings of Christ! His first one in Bethlehem, His second one to us when we are baptized and receive our First Communion and on through our life, and the last one when He comes to judge the whole human race, who will stand before Him at the final judgment.

**B. Preparation for His Coming (2 Peter 3:14-18).** "While waiting for this," make every effort to be found without stain, not just without mortal sin, but without stain of sin. Before the writer concludes, he mentions Paul, "our beloved brother" who also wrote about this in "the spirit of wisdom that is his." As many of us, Peter admits that there "are certain passages in them hard to understand" and some distort them (just as they do the rest of Scripture) to their own ruin (2 Peter 3:15-16). By writing thus, Peter tells us that he includes Paul's writing as Holy Scripture, a wonderful help to the Church in deciding what to include in the New Testament.

In regard to knowing the date or time of a writing there are little clues such as "Our forefathers have been laid to rest... " (2 Peter 3:4b). This probably means the apostolic fathers, and so this letter attributed to Peter is thought to have been by a later author in Peter's name and about Peter, as was so often done.

### IV. IMAGES OF PETER IN NEW TESTAMENT THOUGHT

Peter played several roles: an early disciple of Jesus, perhaps the first witness of the risen Jesus, the leader and spokesman of the Twelve, and Peter the missionary. In this last, he is seen as the great Christian fisherman, as Jesus called him in Mark's gospel: "Henceforth you will be catching men" (Mark 1:17). After the resurrection, Peter initiated a fishing expedition that with Jesus' help makes an astounding catch, and Peter hauls it ashore without the net breaking. In Luke 22:32, Jesus assigns him the role of strengthening "your brothers."

John 21 shows us Peter as the shepherd of "my sheep" as Jesus gives His last words before ending His resurrection days with them. 1 Peter 5 shows him as a model presbyter who can instruct other presbyters; Matthew 16:19 shows Jesus giving Peter the keys of the kingdom and of binding

and loosing the followers of Christ. This is a strong reference that led to the Church's understanding of Peter as the head of the Church.

Finally, Peter the martyr for Christ died in Rome in the 60's.

Other special roles of Peter have been seen as "the confessor of the true Christian faith," through his confession of Christ in Matthew 16:16 as the Messiah and the Son of the living God. To the early Church after the Resurrection Peter was the

rock ("Peter" comes from the Greek work "rock" which Jesus called him in Matthew 16:17). He was early seen as Peter the receiver of special revelation. He witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration, he spoke for the Twelve in Jerusalem, he had the powers of binding and loosing, and so was a guardian of the faith against false teaching. And lastly, he shares with millions of Christians the role of repentant sinner.

\* \* \* \* \*