A Patristic Commentary



The Book of Peter 2

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THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

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Introduction

Writer of the Epistle:

Many doubted the writer of that epistle. St. Eronemos said that there are few who doubted who wrote that second epistle because of the difference in the style between that epistle and the first one. However, he ascertained that St. Peter is the one who wrote it, and considered it one of the Catholikon epistles in his letter to Paulimius. He clarified that the difference between the two epistles is the difference in translation. The following are the proofs that the author is St. Peter:

First: Some writers tried to count the number of common Greek words between the two epistles and they found that: 369 words were used in the first epistle and not the second, and that 230 words were used in the second epistle and not the first, and that one hundred words were used in the two epistles.

A. We notice that one sixth of the common words between the two epistles is a big percentage to make us not doubt.

B. St. Peter does not know the Greek language, so the one who translated the first epistle for him is different than the one who translated the second epistle.

C. The difference in the subject and the purpose lessens the existence of common words.

Second: The early church accepted that epistle, for Yusabios the historian[1] mentioned that **St. Clement of Alexandria** excerpted some parts from it. **St. Jerome**, Firmilians, the bishop of Caesaria, and Origen his disciple has ascertained that St. Peter is the writer.

- **St. Clement of Rome** excerpted many of his writings from it.
- There were many words and expressions only mentioned in the writings of this epistle like: the road of truth, not being diligent and unfruitful, eternal kingdom, the prophetic words[2].
- This epistle is very similar to the epistle of St. Jude.

Third: St. Peter mentioned the epistles of St. Paul in chapter (3: 5, 16), which made some think it was written at a later date after St. Paul's letters.

To refute that, the epistles were written and spread between the different churches immediately (Col. 4:16), besides having a strong friendship between the two apostles, which made St. Peter know St. Paul's letters.

Fourth: The testimony of the writer himself, for the following reasons:

1. He started the epistle by saying "Simon Peter".
2. He called himself one among the apostles. (1:1, 3:2)
3. He was with the Lord Himself in the transfiguration. (1: 16-18)
4. He wrote that he has written a previous epistle. (3: 1)

To whom was it written?

[1] Ecol. His. 6:14:1.

[2] راجع "دراسات في رسالة بطرس الرسول الثانية" للدكتور موريس تاوضروس.

It was directed to the Christians of Asia Minor, of which the first epistle was directed to. He wrote, "I now write to you this second epistle…" (2 Pet. 3: 1)

When was it written?

It was written toward the end of his life as it is apparent from his saying, "Knowing that shortly I must put off my tent…" (2 Pet. 1: 14), that is between the years 64 and 68 A.D.

Reasons for writing it:

1. Since the Lord has declared to him his departure from this world, he wanted to send his children his final commandments to tell them about the precious yearning of his heart which is "The kingdom of heaven and the Second Coming of the Lord."

2. Waiting for the heavenly kingdom drives the believer to the life of holiness and rejecting heresies.

Similarity of this epistle to the epistle of St. Jude[3]:

First: The two epistles are similar, especially what came in the second chapter:

1. False teachers	2 Pet. 2: 1-3	Jude v. 4
2. Destruction of the angels who sinned	2 Pet. 2: 4	Jude v. 6
3. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah	2 Pet. 2: 2	Jude v. 7
4. Uncleanness and speaking evil of dignitaries	2 Pet. 2: 10-12	Jude v. 8-10
5. Feasting of the teachers	2 Pet. 2:13	Jude v. 12
6. Following the way of Balaam	2 Pet. 2:15	Jude v. 11
7. Reserving the heretics for darkness:	2 Pet. 2:17	Jude v. 13
8. Speaking swelling words of emptiness	2 Pet. 2:18	Jude v. 16
9. Reminding them of the apostles' sayings	2 Pet. 3: 1-3	Jude v. 17, 18

Second: This close resemblance between the two epistles in meaning, purpose, style, and even words, made some scholars assume the following:

1. That one of them depended on the other, for some said that St. Peter depended on St. Jude's letter while some said the opposite.

2. Some said that the second chapter of the second epistle of St. Peter until the second verse of the third chapter was added to the original letter depending on the letter of St. Jude, and that the rest of the epistle is its true content. No one supported that point of view for moving to this part (2 Pet. 2: 1-3: 2) is a natural transition and if we omit it, the epistle would not be complete. Moreover, the unity of the style in this epistle proves that this assumption is false.

3. Many of the expressions in the epistle of St. Jude clarified what was mentioned in the second epistle of St. Peter However; St. Peter used the future tense, while St. Jude mentioned it as a true event that is the epistle of St. Peter preceded the epistle of St. Jude.

It was mentioned in the epistle of St. Jude that the apostles have prophesied about these matters (Jude 17, 18). Probably, he meant St. Peter as one of them.

St. Jude, using some expressions as St. Paul which St. Peter did not use (like to those who are called v. 1), the saints (Jude v. 3), these dreamers (Jude v.19), made some say that St. Jude did not excerpt his epistle from St. Peter but the similarities are due to the unity of circumstances, unity of purpose and unity of time.

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[3] راجع "دراسات في رسالة بطرس الرسول الثانية" للدكتور موريس تاوضروس.

The epistle is divided into three parts:

1. The kingdom of heaven: chapter 1
2. The appearance of false teachers: chapter 2
3. The Second Coming of Christ: chapter 3

Chapter One

The kingdom of heaven.

1. God's act for the kingdom **v. 1 - 4**
2. Man's strife for the kingdom **v. 5 – 11**
3. Assurance of the eternal kingdom
First: It does not need assurance **v. 12 – 15**
Second: Transfiguration testifies for it **v. 16 – 18**
Third: The prophets testify for it **v. 19 – 21**

1. God's Act for the Kingdom

"Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ." (v. 1)

This introduction is different from the first epistle:

First: he mentioned his first name "Simon" with the name the Lord Jesus called him "Peter".

Second: He called himself a bondservant, stating the truth of his position toward the Lord Jesus Christ. [1]

Third: Since he talks about the kingdom of heaven and the Second Coming of the Lord, therefore, he starts by saying that it is direct toward "those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of the our God and Savior Jesus Christ." Here we notice the following:

1. He did not say "to the pilgrims of the Dispersion…" as mentioned in the First Epistle, where he talks about the sufferings and tribulations, so he reminds them of their pilgrimage. But here he talks to "those who have obtained like precious faith", for this is the road of the kingdom.

2. It was hard for them to realize that the faith delivered to the Gentiles is equal to their faith, therefore, he ascertained "like precious faith".

3. Lest the reader may think that the kingdom is only for the apostles and the disciples, he confirmed that the precious faith is equal to the apostles by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ, so no one has credit for the salvation.

4. He does not say "Our Savior", but "Savior", clarifying that the Lord Jesus came to save the entire human race.

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you" (v. 2): refer to First Peter 1: 2.

"In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. " (v. 2): The conditions of enjoying the grace of our Lord Jesus and His true peace is the divine knowledge, not the mere intellectual knowledge but also the practical.

Therefore, **Father Nestore** [2] asks us to heed the practical knowledge and not just mere knowledge. He said: [It is impossible for an impure soul, no matter how her desires are for reading, to gain the spiritual knowledge, for no one can pour a good ointment or delicious honey in a dirty container, for the dirty, smelly container can ruin what is poured inside. The pure container is more affected by what is poured in it.]

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[1] Refer to the interpretation of St. James 1 : 1 (p. 10,11)
[2] John Kassian # 14: 14

This true knowledge carries eternal life, for the Lord said: "This is eternal life that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17: 3)

"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us to glory and virtue by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (v. 3, 4)

St. Peter has pointed that:

First: Those who are called to the kingdom:

God has declared to us His deep love for He called everyone a general call to the eternal inheritance, for he is "the Savior", offering us free and precious faith, without any partiality. (v. 1)

This precious faith is neither for a certain people nor for a specific race, but God offered it "by the righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who paid a precious price on the cross for it, His blood!

Second: Calling for glory and virtue:

The call is general and free, which means the unlimited love of God who calls us to be adorned with glory and virtue. We are called to be adorned with God and His virtues, for He is our glory. We are called to be united with Him and to follow His example, so we may obtain the love of God, His holiness, His patience and endurance, His meekness and simplicity. That is why he said, "to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Since we are in the world, how can we escape the corruption? By our unity with the Holy God and by uniting with Him, then the corruption of the world cannot touch us. It is a precious calling that the rays of His divine attributes, like love, holiness and meekness, are reflected on us so we may resemble Him. (1 John 3:2, Matt 6:23)

Third: The capabilities of the calling:

What is the use of this precious calling, which is offered to us so we may obtain a heavenly glory and spiritual virtues if we cannot implement it? That is why St. Peter said: "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" St. Peter is saying that we have no excuse because God has granted us by His divine power all things that pertain to life and godliness, for He offered us:

1. A new and heavenly birth where we are born spiritually to resemble the Holy God.

Father Hippolytus [3] said: [I plead to you to listen to me, I would like that you return to the fountain of life to see the Fountain full of healing. The Eternal Father sent His Son, His Eternal Word, to the world to wash man by water and spirit, so He restored to us the incorruptibility of the soul and body, breathed in us the breath of life, and supplied us with an incorruptible weapon.

When man becomes eternal, he becomes a god. Being baptized by water and the Holy Spirit in the baptismal font and becoming a god, he becomes a partaker in the inheritance with Christ after his resurrection from the dead. (Rom. 8: 17)

I preach this goal: come all you nations to eternity which is granted by baptism. I present you with good news, you who are walking in darkness! Come to freedom from

[3] Hippolytus: Discourse of the Holy Theophany 8.

captivity, to the kingdom, you who are in darkness! Come to incorruption, you who are in corruption!

One may wander: But how? By the water and the Holy Spirit.

This is the water attached to the Spirit, by which the Paradise is watered and which the plants grow and the animals reproduce. To summarize in one word, man is born again and enjoys life.]

2. Consecrating all members, senses, emotions and instincts by the sacrament of Meyroon.

3. Washing our feet with the disciples by the pure hands of the Lord Jesus who proceeds us in the sacrament of penance and confession and washes us.

4. Abiding in Him and He in us through the sacrament of communion.

5. He granted us spiritual teachings for our growth, whereby the Spirit nurtures us in the church.

6. The spirit offers all what we need from fruits , earthly and spiritual blessings for our salvation.

2. Man's strife for the kingdom

The importance of strife for our salvation

The Lord has presented us:

1. Precious faith by the righteousness of our Lord, without it we cannot cross to eternity.

2. Calling to glory and virtue.

3. Divine capabilities of life and godliness.

Having these divine capabilities, is it possible that one will be saved without strife?

We cannot be saved unless we participate in carrying the cross, not by our own selves but by the grace of God, the helper and the guide.

How awesome is God's love to make us bend and carry the cross with Him like Simon the Cyrean!

St. Peter wrote: "But also for this reason, giving all diligence" (v. 5) , that is, for the sake of the eternal call or for your salvation, give all diligence. What are we diligent for? We are diligent as the Father sacrificed His Only Begotten Son, in the same manner, we sacrifice our son (that is anything favorable to us and we slay him to the Lord as Abraham offered Isaac.

The road of struggle

"Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." (v. 5,6 7)

St. Peter is connecting all the virtues together, without stating them in a chronological order; for he does not say, "After your faith, add virtue".

All the church fathers ascertain that all virtues are interrelated with each other, without separation.

1. Virtue: St. Peter is asking us to add virtue to our faith so that our faith is not dead.

2. Knowledge: Whoever walks in the virtue without knowledge is like one walking without any goal; and whoever has knowledge without abiding in virtue becomes a proud talkative person. [5]

3. Self-control: Whoever has practical knowledge is chaste toward sin and everything temporal, longing for the eternity. As self control is based on knowledge, it also supports knowledge.

4. Perseverance: Self control stemming from the love of heavenly matters gives one endurance so he may forsake everything willingly. Perseverance or endurance supports self control, for without perseverance, one cannot control himself.

5. Godliness: Enduring for the heavenly matters grants one godliness, that is, reverence and divine fear; and this godliness helps one so he may endure patiently.

6. Brotherly kindness: Whoever fears God treats his brothers with kindness and compassion, and this brotherly love fills the heart godliness and reverence.

7. Love: Whoever has love has obtained all virtues and there is no virtue without love. As much as the heart is widened with brotherly love, as much as one loves God; and as much as one loves God as much as one's heart is widened to love people.

St. Dorotheos [6] said: {Imagine rays or lines coming out of the center of a circle. As much as the lines are away from the center, as much as they are away from each other and the opposite is true.

Suppose that this circle is the world and the center of the circle is God, and all the lines from the center to the circumference or from the circumference to the center are the ways of men, then we find that as much as the saints move inside the circle toward the center to come closer to God, the closer they get together.

The importance of strife and the danger of not struggling:

1. "For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." (v. 8)

Struggling in the previous virtues and growing in them, we become very active and have a fruitful life. These fruits are a means to know our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is why the church asks from the godmother to plant these virtues in the baptized baby, who is just coming out of the baptismal font watered by the Holy Spirit.

2. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins." (v. 9)

Whoever is empty of these virtues is a blind person, without any spiritual enlightenment. He cannot realize how much he has lost of the purity of baptism. He is short sighted and sees only the earthly matters and forgets all God's acts with him.

3. "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble." (10)

Strife is essential to make the call and election sure, for without it, man stumbles like the blind and loses his call and election. [7]

Lest anyone should despair, St. Peter continued:

"For so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (v. 11)

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[5] Refer to the interpretation of James 2: 14 –25 (p. 41 –45)
[6] Filokalia 176.
[7] Refer to the interpretation of the First Epistle of St. John

The kingdom of God is wide open to anyone who struggles, for if we endure with Him, we will reign with Him also. (Tit. 2:12) His doors are wide open for He is generous and gives abundantly.

3. Assurance of the eternal kingdom

First: It does not need a reminder:

The subject of the kingdom is not new, but he is merely reminding them of it.

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." (12-15)

St. Peter realized that he will soon depart from this world, as **St. Ambrosios** [8] related that the pagans were furious at St. Peter and wanted to kill him. The believers told him to escape from Rome. While he was leaving the gates of the city of Rome, the Lord Jesus appeared to him. St. Peter asked Him, "Where are you going, my Master?" The Lord Jesus answered, "To Rome to be crucified once more.". St. Peter realized that the Lord Jesus wants him to be martyred. He went back and told that to the believers. He was imprisoned for nine months then he was crucified upside down, and they beheaded St. Paul at the same day.

Realizing that he is about to depart from this world made him constantly to remind his children of their eternity? A believer is not tired from hearing the same reminder, but is eager to hear it as if it is the first time.

St. Peter is asking them to remember this after his departure.

Second: Transfiguration witnesses to His kingdom:

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." (v. 16)

Preaching the kingdom was not mere imagination on the part of the apostles but they have known and seen His majesty and power through His transfiguration and acts. St. Peter, with James and John, has seen the transfiguration, of which the Lord has said, "Assuredly I say to you that there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom." (Matt. 16:28)

St. John also has testified about what he has seen on the mountain of transfiguration. He said, "… And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

What has he realized on the mountain of transfiguration?

"For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the excellent glory: 'This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." (v. 17,18)

1. His glory and honor, which He took from the Father, were revealed. He emptied Himself by His own free will, and He became a servant to accept the glory and honor from the hands of Father in complete obedience. This acceptance is not for Him,

[8] Sermon 68

but it is acceptance of the entire human race in His person, so we may be partakers in His glory and honor.

2. The Father testifies that He is His Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. They have heard it, and the testimony is built on two or three witnesses.

3. This voice was "from heaven", for the glory of the Lord and His honor are not earthly but heavenly.

4. When the Lord was transfigured on the mountain, He made it holy. "We were with Him on the holy mountain."

Fourth: The prophets witness to Him:

"And we have the prophetic word confirmed which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (v. 19)

St. Peter, as a servant to the Jews, is concerned about the prophecies of the Old Testament. (1 Pet. 1:10-12, Acts 3:20, 21) These are the most correct testimonies because they are the testimonies of the prophecies from different times, and they all go around the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, His suffering, His crucifixion, His resurrection and His glorious Second Coming.

St. Peter is praising them about their concern about studying the prophecies and examining them well. When they heed to these prophecies, they destroy all darkness and the Light of the morning star shines in the heart, that is, the Lord Jesus, and His dawn lights the darkness of the heart.

"Knowing this first that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (v. 20, 21)

The prophets have recorded their prophecies, not by their own personal efforts through their own interpretation, but they are like a harp moved by the hands of the Holy Spirit to produce sweet tune of the love of God declared in His incarnation, His death and resurrection and His Second Coming, so we may inherit with Him!

St. Peter called them, "holy men", for they are his harp, driven like a ship who is directed by a smart driver.

That is what St. Peter said, "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David …" (Acts 1:15)

Father Hippolytus [9]said: {It is said about the holy prophets that they are our eyes, for they have seen, through faith, the mysteries of the word, and became servants to these matters concerning the future generations. They speak, not only about past matters, but declare the present and the future.

These prophets are nourished by the Holy Spirit and were honored by the Word Himself. They were like musical instruments and the word was like a plectrum, working in harmony. Since the Word (Christ) was urging them to declare the will of God, they did not speak of their own nor according to their desires.]

[9] Hippolytus: Treatise on Christ and antichrist 2.

Chapter Two

The appearance of false teachers:

1. Appearance of heretics and their danger	v. 1 – 2
2. Their judgment is sure	v. 3 – 9
3. Their attributes	v. 10 – 22.

1. The appearance of heretics and their danger

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies even denying the Lord who brought them and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." (v. 1, 2)

Satan does not stop to deceive people by marring the truth through manifesting things similar to it. As the Holy Spirit works in the true prophets witnessing to the Lord, so the devil works in the false prophets. (Jer. 14:14, 23:25, Deut. 13:1-5) As there are true shepherds, there are also false teachers.

The Lord Jesus warned us to beware of them[10], as St. Paul warned the bishops of Ephesus by saying, "And from among you men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20: 30)

Tertillian the scholar said: [11] [We should not be astonished that there are heretics, for the Lord has previously warned us about them, for they ruin the faith of some, but they are as a test of faith to purify us. (1 Cor. 11:19)]

Heresies have their disadvantages as well as their advantages. The disadvantages are:

1. They deny the Lord who bought them, reviling the precious blood paid for the true faith. [12]

2. Not only they perish but they attract others for destruction.

3. They sin against God, for because of them, they blaspheme the way of truth. In spite of them claiming that they are abiding by the Gospel, yet they deviate from the orthodox faith so they bring blasphemy on the name of the Lord.

The advantages of the heresies, as **St. Augustine** said [13] : [Heresies attract us to know the mysteries of God and strengthen our faith. My brethren, God uses even the evil for our own good, for the weak souls are troubled because of the heresies, but in the mean time, these heresies drive them to dig in the Holy Bible to seek the truth so they are nurtured with sufficient milk.]

2. Their judgment is sure

"By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber." (v. 3)

Since they revile the precious blood shed for them using deceptive words "by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. 16: 18)

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[10] Matt. 7: 15, 24: 24
[11] Tert: The prescription against heretics 1.
[12] Refer to Acts 20:28, 1 Cor. 6:20,37, Rev. 5: 9.
[13] Sermons on certain chapters from the New Testament.

Therefore it was said that their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber", even if they felt secure for this is a false secure and the proof is that:

"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment." (v. 4)

We notice that saying "He cast them" in the past tense, means that this is assured for the future.

St. Augustine [15] used this expression to prove that the evil angels were not created like that, but by falling in sin, they became evil.

Second: The destruction of the old world:

"And did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly." (v. 5)

This sentence is related to the previous one, "For if God did not spare the ancient world during the time of Noah who preached righteousness and they did not listen to him. God punished them with a flood, so how can He not condemn the heretics?!

He preserved Noah, who was the eighth person in the ark. Probably he entered after his sons and their wives to make sure that they were protected. Their few numbers did not prevent God's care for them. Also, the multitude of the evil people does not prevent their condemnation.

Third: Burning Sodom and Gomorrah:

"And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly." (v. 6)

Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes became a lesson for all the human history. Since their evil increased abundantly, then God has destroyed them; in the same manner every one who continues to commit evil and does not repent**.** [16]

God condemned them by destruction, as one who is sentenced to death, for the wages of sin is death.

Even in their destruction which is the fruit of their evil deeds, yet God can change that evil to the good of others so they may repent. God revealed how much He cares for His children, for in the burning of the two cities, God did not forget Lot with his two daughters.

"And delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds. (v. 7, 8)

Lot has put himself in the midst of the evil people, for he has chosen the fertile land and left the barren land to his uncle Abraham, therefore, he deserved to walk out empty handed

However, Lot did not mingle with the evil people in their filthy conduct, but his soul was tormented day to day from what he sees and hears from their lawless deeds!

God delivered Lot (Gen. 19: 16) for not defiling himself from the surrounding environment for he was tormented from the lawless conduct of the evil people..

"Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." (v. 9)

This is the result which the divine inspiration wants to declare:

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[15] Nature of good against wanichalns.

[16] Refer to the interpretation of 7 (p. 7,8)

1. In the midst of temptation, God distinguishes between the godly and the unjust who are reserved for punishment.

2. Leaving the godly to live among the evil people, God does not mean that He had forgotten the godly but He delivers them from temptation, like in the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The sewer let the weeds and the wheat both grow until the harvest day.

3. God does not rush in punishing the ungodly but He keeps them under punishment for the Day of Judgment.

3. Their attributes:

St. Peter summarized the attributes of the false teachers in the following:

1. They walk according to the flesh.
2. They despise authority.
3. They are ignorant like beasts.
4. They love pleasure.
5. They are deceivers.
6. They love wages.
7. They are barren.
8. They distort the concept of freedom.

Some of these attributes were explained in the epistle of Jude. [17]

1. They walk according to the flesh: "And especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness". In his article about chastity[18], St. Augustine distinguished between:

A. **The flesh and its instincts**: is from God who is full of goodness.

B. **The spirit with its energies**: is from God who is full of goodness.

C. **The lusts of the flesh:** are intruding on man because of man's deviation from using the instincts in the right way which God had planned.

D. **The desires of the spirit**: which are yearning to be in bosom of the Creator, and these are against the desires of the flesh, which are like diseases intruding on man.

Saying "walking according to the flesh" means that man walks according to the lusts of the flesh or his earthly desires and not according to these desires of the spirit or God's heavenly will**. St. Augustine** said [19]:.

[St. Paul has revealed this in a clearer way when saying, "Aren't you carnal, walking according to men." If it was that those who walk according to the flesh are reprimanded and those who walk according to men are praised, he wouldn't have said "walking according to men".

Listen, O man, do not walk according to men, but according to your Creator. Do not escape from the One who brought you in existence. Do not escape from Him by depending on yourself, for he who did not according to men said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. 3: 5) Do not walk according to your own desires lest you perish. When you hear the saying, "If you live according to the flesh, you will die…" (Rom. 8:

[17] Interpretation of St. Jude, p. 8 – 11.
[18] Was translated in a pamphlet called "Chastity".
[19] Chastity by St. Augustine, p. 32 – 34.

13) Do not live according to your desires, for the devil does not have a body, but because he wanted to live according to his desires, he did not abide in the truth. (Rom. 8: 44)

Therefore, those teachers walk according to the flesh that is according to their desires in the lust of uncleanness. What more uncleanness is when one accepts his will rather than God's will and rather than being led by the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8: 14)

2. **They despise authority:** "**And despise authority. They are presumptuous and self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord." (v. 10, 11)**

We previously have explained that in the epistle of St. Jude.

They are very self opinionated and do not want to submit to the traditions which the church has received from generation to generation, but they interpret the Gospel according to their own private thoughts.

They do not want to follow the example of the humble angels who, although they are full of power and understanding and wisdom, yet they do not judge the devils but they leave the judgment to God. (Refer to the interpretation of the epistle of St. Jude, p. 9)

3. They are ignorant like animals:

"But these like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and they will utterly perish in their own corruption." (v. 12)

Since they reject the truth and oppose it, then they become without understanding like the beasts. St. Anthony the Great said [20] : {These souls perish like the brute beasts, for their minds are pulled by lusts as the wild horses pull their passengers.} Moreover, they became even less than them.

A. The animals are brute by nature, while man has a mind, as **St. Anthony** the Great said: [21][To help man in his relationship with God.] But when they deviate from what they were created for, they become less than the animals.

B. The animals are created for hunting and destruction, however, man is created to live forever. St. Anthony the Great said [22] : [When a sane person examines himself, he finds what is beneficial for him and guides himself to salvation. However, he avoids what is harmful for him, when he sees strange things leading to destruction.]

C. The heretics, not only are ignorant about the truth but they attack the truth, though it would have been better if they would have been silent because of their ignorance.

D. The reason for their destruction is not outside of them, for they utterly perish in their own corruption, which is they surrendered themselves to destruction.

4. They love pleasure:

"And will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their deceptions while they feast with you." (v. 13)

We see them as though they are successful in the world, for they have pleasure for a short day, which will end and the Day of Judgment will come.

[20] Filokalia p. 41
[21] Filokalia p. 48
[22] Filokalia p. 21

This is their principle as the principle of the Epicureans, "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we will die." They rejoice for a temporary pleasure, ignoring the heavenly eternal pleasure. They follow Esau's example that for the pleasure of eating lentil soup, he sold his birthright and wept bitterly, but was for no use.

St. Paul said, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." (Eph. 6:8) Since they take their pleasure here, then they suffer over there in eternity.

The danger of those heretics are that "they feast with you", that is they relate themselves to the banquet of Christ and consider themselves as members in the church while they carry all hatred and animosity.

5. Deceivers:

"Having eyes full of adultery and they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children." (v. 14)

Whoever lives in lewdness, his eyes become full of adultery, so he loses the simple eye which lights the whole body; and his eyes become dark and see only what is evil and do not cease from sin.

Those teachers, whose eyes are full of lewdness, do not cease to sin, tricking the unsteadfast souls through their outward appearance full of zeal, enthusiasm, chastity and purity.

They have a heart trained in greediness; they are children of the curse that is their hearts carry what their eyes carry from lewdness. Their hearts are never satisfied, but they are in continuous greediness, not only in material things, but also in committing evil and in showing off and being self righteous, even on the expense of perishing the simple people and making them deviate from their simple faith! Thus they are called "accursed children."

6. They love wages[23] **:**

"They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity; a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet." (v. 15, 16)

They have forsaken the right way, which means that one day they were following the right way but they deviated from it. They were deceived by the way of Balaam who loved the wages of unrighteousness more than the service of God, so his mind was closed and could not understand. God has used the dumb donkey to rebuke the one who had lost his mind.

7. Infertile:

"They are well without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (v. 17)

They have a deceiving appearance from outside. When a thirsty man finds a well, he is pleased because he can drink from it, but when he finds no water, he is disappointed; and also like a farmer who rejoices with the clouds but soon it is carried by the wind without sending rain.

[23] Refer to the interpretation p. 11, 10

This reality will be revealed in the eternity, for "whom is revealed the blackness of darkness." God is patient with them here on earth, but they are kept for eternal darkness.

"For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error." (v. 18)

In pride and self righteousness**,** they claim that their teachings are correct, but in fact, they are deceived by the lusts of the flesh, that is by their own desires, and they attract people to cast them in what is worst than evil.

They offer great hopes and open the door to sinners, and they rely on their own philosophy so they deviate the sinners in their corruption.

8. They distort the meaning of freedom:

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage." (v. 19)

They preach freedom, but unfortunately, they themselves are enslaved to sin because they are overcome by it. As the Lord Jesus said, "Most assuredly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." (John 8: 34)

Probably they used this nice word "freedom", for which the Lord has come, incarnated, suffered, died, rose and ascended to heaven. All that so that He may ascend us with Him as free children and heirs of the kingdom. They used this word in a wrong meaning like:

1. To be liberated from the law by a mockery way. **Father Theonas** tackled this subject with **Father John Kassian** and **Father Jermanios** [24] . Father John said to **Father Theonas** [25] : [The person submitting to the laws of the law cannot reach the perfection of the gospel, even if he brags that he is a Christian and is liberated by the grace of God.]

2. To be liberated from the order which the church has put for the sake of her children.

3. Liberty meaning chaos in worship, where each one does what he wants without any guidance.

"For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning." (v. 20)

After they preached the Lord Jesus as Savior, they go back to sin enslaved by it, then their end is worse than the beginning. This is like the parable which the Lord Jesus said in the Gospel of St. Luke chapter (11: 26). After the devil has gone out of the man, he returned to the place from which he came, he found it swept and put in order, so he took seven other spirits more wicked than himself, so the last state of that man is worse than the first.

The cause of their state in the second time was:

1. Their ignorance is no more an excuse.
2. He who fell deliberately does not listen any more to anyone who guides him.
3. Falling deliberately drives man to despair.

[24] Kassian 21 (Rest during the holy fifty)
[25] Kassian 21 (p. 528)

“For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” (v. 21, 22)

St. Peter excerpted this verse from the book of the Proverbs: “As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” (Prov. 26: 11)

Wallowing is the place for wallowing, and the mire is the black mud in which the pigs go into.

After they have heard and talked about the freedom in Christ, they go back to the life of captivity because of their evil and they become slaves once more.

St. Augustine said: [26][Though a good man is a slave, yet he is free, but though an evil person is a king, yet he is a slave.]

[26] City of God 4: 12: 3.

Chapter Three

The Second Coming of Christ

1. The Holy Bible focuses on His Second Coming: v. 1, 2
2. The heretics deny His Second Coming: v. 3 – 10
3. Our duties toward His Second Coming: v. 11 – 14
4. Conclusion: v. 15 – 18

1. The Holy Bible focuses on His Second Coming:

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

As he emphasized in the first epistle, he is repeating that he is not writing something new in this second epistle, but he is repeating what he said concerning the Second Coming of the Lord,[27] which was:

1. Spoken before by the holy prophets.
2. The Lord commanded it. (Matt. 24: 26 – 39 & Mark 13: 35 – 37 & Lk. 12: 40.
3. The apostles and the disciples commanded it. (1 Thess. 5: 2 – 4)

This is the purpose of the word of God in both testaments, to wait for His Second Coming and be with Him forever.

2. The heretics deny His Second Coming

"Knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days , walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." (v. 3, 4)

We are certain that there are some scoffers whom their own lusts drive them to deny the divine inspiration and the resurrection and the judgment.

St. Augustine said that behind every atheism, there is lust, so that one may calm his conscience and justifies what he does to himself.

St. Peter answers by the following, ascertaining the Second Coming of the Lord by:

1. The creation and the flood:

"For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men." (v. 5,6,7)

St. Augustine [28] said that St. Peter did not mention any thing, in this part (1 – 13) about the resurrection of the dead, focusing on the proofs about the destruction of the world.

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[27] Some see that St. Peter means that the Lord, the apostles and the prophets have prophesied that there will be false prophets who deny His Second Coming.

[28] City of God 20 : 18

Saying that everything is remaining the same since the beginning of the creation, they forgot that by the word of God the heavens were formed and by His breath all His armies were created. They forgot that the Creator has allowed the flood to destroy those on earth (Gen7: 11), and this is a simplified picture of the coming destruction for the ungodly.

2. God does not submit to time:

"But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (v. 8)

Man submits to time, that is why he hastens matters, however, God does not submit to time, but He is above its limits, for everything is apparent before Him. No wander He considered the creation, since Adam until His Second Coming, as one day (Matt. 20: 8). David the Psalmist said: "For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past…" (Ps. 90: 4)

Father Lanctantius [29] used this same verse to prove that the day of creation does not mean a regular day that is twenty- four hours.

3. The Long suffering of God:

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent hear; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." (v. 9, 10)

The day of the Lord, for the evil people, is like a thief who comes all of a sudden in the middle of the night, in the midst of their darkness. However, for the righteous people, it is like a wedding day where the souls are wed to their Heavenly Bridegroom.

There was a severe attack against that saying about how the elements will melt away? But we thank the Lord, for in this age, we saw how the atom can melt and cause burns. Moreover, some countries have the ability to destroy the earth and burn it with the atomic bomb.

St. Augustine clarified that the "heavens" mean the material heavens, that is the planets, and not the heavens meaning the eternal throne of God.

3. Our duties toward His Second Coming

Since the Bible focuses on our encounter with the Lord and directs our attention toward eternity, then it is not enough that we reject the sayings of the heretics, but we have to:

"Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" (11)

We are departing from this world, so let us be in holy conduct which befits eternity.

Then, the dissolving of the heavens and the earth is not a fearful subject, but a subject of hope.

"Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire and the elements will melt with fervent heat." (v. 12)

[29] Lanctantius (260/330) The Divine institutes 7: 14.

Wait for the blessed hope and the appearance of the great glory of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. (Tit. 2: 13) This hope stirs in the church a yearning toward a holy life and longing to the coming of the Lord, praying every day, "Let Your Kingdom come", loving His appearance (2 Tim. 4: 8). She communes with Him saying, "Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22: 20)

"Nevertheless, we according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." (v. 13)

The bride waits for her house where she meets her bridegroom in an amazing union! She waits for new heavens, that is not materialistic, but it is the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2), which is the subject of the hope of everyone (Heb. 11:10). Therefore, she does not cease to struggle for it!

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (v. 14)

This hope drives the church to be persistent to train herself, by the hands of the Holy God. By His grace and His Holy Spirit, He, "He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5: 27)

As St. John said, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19: 7,8) He also said, "Then, I John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." (Rev. 21:2)

4. Conclusion

"And consider that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking to them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever, Amen." (v. 15-18)

The purpose of all that is to benefit from God's long-suffering for our salvation by growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. The more the time prolongs, the more we should grow more and more without neglecting our salvation.

St. Paul has recorded all these matters. St. Peter calls St. Paul his beloved brother, although St. Paul rebuked St. Peter once. (Gal. 2:3) However, some have twisted the words of St. Paul, thinking that the resurrection will happen in their days, as the Thessalonians thought. Also, the Corinthians misunderstood St. Paul, in his first epistle, and they stopped working, waiting for His Second Coming. Some mocked his saying that what the apostle has said regarding the resurrection, has not been fulfilled. That is why St. Paul sent his second epistle to the Corinthians.