

2 Peter 2:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

Analysis

Chapter 2, verse 20 - Comprehensive theological analysis. Peter continues his urgent apostolic warning about the dangers facing the church. This verse contributes crucial insights to understanding false teachers' characteristics, God's judgment patterns, and believers' proper response. The Greek terminology reveals theological precision in Peter's argument, emphasizing both divine sovereignty in salvation and human responsibility in sanctification.

The immediate context connects to Peter's broader argument about maintaining doctrinal purity and moral integrity while awaiting Christ's return. Greek word studies illuminate the specific nature of the threats Peter identifies and the resources God provides for perseverance. This passage resonates with Old Testament prophetic warnings, Jesus' teaching about false prophets, and Paul's pastoral instructions, demonstrating biblical theology's consistency across testaments and authors.

Christ-centered interpretation reveals how this verse ultimately points to Jesus as the standard for truth, the source of power for godly living, and the coming Judge who will vindicate the faithful and condemn the wicked. The eschatological dimension reminds believers that present struggles occur within the larger framework of redemptive history culminating in Christ's glorious return and the establishment of the new heavens and new earth.

Historical Context

The first-century church faced unique challenges from both pagan Greco-Roman culture and Jewish opposition, while also contending with internal threats from false teachers who distorted apostolic doctrine. Peter writes in the shadow of Nero's persecution (AD 64-68) and his own approaching martyrdom, making this letter his urgent final testament to the churches. Early Gnostic influences promoting secret knowledge, antinomian ethics, and denial of Christ's physical return created the specific heresies Peter addresses.

Understanding the social, religious, and philosophical context of the Roman Empire illuminates Peter's concerns and arguments. The delay of Christ's parousia created pastoral challenges as expectations of imminent return gave way to questions about timing and certainty. Jewish apocalyptic literature, Greco-Roman moral philosophy, and mystery religions all influenced how different groups understood salvation, ethics, and eschatology, requiring apostolic clarification to maintain orthodox Christianity.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this verse challenge compromises you might be tempted to make for cultural acceptance or personal comfort?
2. What practices would help you grow in discernment to recognize and resist false teaching in its contemporary forms?
3. How should the certainty of Christ's return and judgment shape your priorities, relationships, and use of time and resources?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|--------------------|
| εἰ | γὰρ | ἀποφυγόντες | τὰ | μιάσματα | τοῦ | κόσμου |
| if | For | after they have escaped | G3588 | the pollutions | G3588 | of the world |
| G1487 | G1063 | G668 | | G3393 | | G2889 |
| ἐν | ἐπιγνώσει | τοῦ | κυρίου | καὶ | σωτῆρος | Ἰησοῦ |
| through | the knowledge | G3588 | of the Lord | and | Saviour | Jesus |
| G1722 | G1922 | | G2962 | G2532 | G4990 | G2424 |
| Χριστοῦ | τούτοις | δὲ | πάλιν | ἐμπλακέντες | ἡττῶνται | |
| Christ | therein | and | again | entangled | G2274 | |
| G5547 | G5125 | G1161 | G3825 | G1707 | | |
| γέγονεν | αὐτοῖς | τὰ | ἔσχατα | χείρονα | τῶν | πρώτων |
| overcome | with them | G3588 | the latter end | is worse | G3588 | than the beginning |
| G1096 | G846 | | G2078 | G5501 | | G4413 |

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 3:19 (Parallel theme): Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Deuteronomy 32:29 (Parallel theme): O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

2 Peter 1:4 (Parallel theme): Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

2 Peter 2:18 (Parallel theme): For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

2 Peter 1:2 (References Jesus): Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

Numbers 24:20 (Parallel theme): And when he looked on Amalek, he took up his parable, and said, Amalek was the first of the nations; but his latter end shall be that he perish for ever.

