

**Lesson 5**  
**Universal Truth: The Catholic Epistles**  
**The Second Epistle of St. Peter**

**Commentary:**

Fr. Farley spends considerable time on the background of this Epistle since there has been a question of its authenticity. Its authorship has been questioned more than any other of the 27 books of the New Testament. Father cites a number of reasons why it is authentic and basically disputes any kind of spiritual forgery. He cites as an example of the Early Church taking authorship seriously, when a well meaning presbyter was deposed for forgery. Authenticity was a very serious matter in the early days.

Fr. Farley goes on to describe the condition in Rome at the time of Peter's arrival. He arrived there in AD63 after the release and departure of St. Paul. So all of you should understand that Paul was in Rome first and it is safe to say he founded the Christian church there. Peter wrote the First Epistle in AD64 and the Second in the spring of AD65. After the Great Fire in Rome in July of AD64, Christians were persecuted severely. It was during this persecution that Peter was arrested and executed around AD67 in the reign of Nero being crucified upside-down.

Given our Early Church study, the reason for both these Epistles is that Christians were dispersed and persecuted for their Faith after the Martyrdom of Stephen (AD33), James (AD62) and the revolt of the Jews in AD70. Christians were ill-treated and forced into exile to the 5 provinces of Asia Minor as noted in the First Epistle of Peter to: Pontus; Galatia; Cappadocia; Asia and Bithynia (1Peter1:1)

Peter's purpose is to encourage fellow Christians to keep their Apostolic Doctrine and grow in holiness and virtue into the ever-lasting Kingdom which is to come. Today, these same words resonate for us in the modern world as we too seek the Kingdom.

- 1.) Please list below the four reasons why Fr. Farley feels strongly about this Epistle being written by the famous Apostle Peter:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2.) T or F. God's Great gifts will help you in escaping the world passions by being partaker of divine nature.
- 3.) What is this divine nature Peter talks about? \_\_\_\_\_.

4.) By escaping moral pollution we must strive with all eagerness and strength: (write in a corresponding Christian personal quality according to St. Peter)

Faith \_\_\_\_\_ self-control \_\_\_\_\_  
Brotherly affection \_\_\_\_\_ virtue \_\_\_\_\_  
Knowledge \_\_\_\_\_ love \_\_\_\_\_

5.) According to Peter if these virtues are not present, then Christians have forgotten what important part of their life? Without your cleansing and illumination through baptism you are therefore \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

6.) The expression “my tabernacle” by Peter means: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Commentary:**

Peter saw as his primary responsibility and duty to warn the churches of the dangers they would face after his death. He grounds his faith and his calling in his experience at the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord where the Father says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I (Myself) am well pleased.” (Matthew 17) This event was his meeting point between heaven and earth, when the meaning of the prophecy was fully revealed. It is an event that is a foretaste of the Second Coming. He wrote to people who knew the truth and exhorted them to live up to it. Interestingly, this same Peter would have known that the voice from heaven confirmed Jesus’ sonship on two other occasions.

Peter concludes by reminding them that Scripture cannot be interpreted by individuals relying on their own fantasies, because it is not the word of humans. Scripture was given to holy people who were moved by the spirit of God. No prophecy comes from humans but by the Holy Spirit. False teachers love to twist the Scriptures interpreting them according to their own ideas. (From the Holy Fathers: Bede; Oecumenius; Gregory the Great; Theophylact; and Symeon)

7.) What are the other two events in Scripture where the Father speaks from heaven glorifying Him and/or His Son?

**2 Peter 2. Evil People and their Fate**

**Commentary:**

This chapter and the next, deal with the problem of false prophets trying to lead church members astray. The false teachers appear to have been Christian teachers who mixed worldly theosophical ideas forming a syncretistic Gnostic form of Christianity. Peter condemns them for their false teaching, immoral behavior and greed, a constant theme for heretics mentioned in the New Testament. God did not spare angels when they sinned (Genesis 6:1-4) by their pride, envy and lust but cast them into the abyss. If God did not spare Angels, who had once stood in

honor before Him because of the immortality of their nature, how much less will He spare human beings whom He created out of perishable matter?

Using examples of how God punished wickedness in the Old Testament: Sodom and Gomorrah first reduced to ashes and covered by the Dead Sea and the ungodliness of mankind from Adam to Noah causing the flood (Genesis 6-9). However, God did not abandon Lot for he had hope, even though he was not able to put things right in Sodom.

Heresy was a universal problem in the Early Church. The Church Fathers held a special kinship with Peter for his fight against heresy. The Fathers who fought similar heresies later in church history had to contend with those who practiced indulging in lust and other immoral acts as the Simonians, Nicolaitians or the Gnostics proposed. These Fathers used Peter's arguments as a text for keeping Christians from false thinking. Although false prophets promise freedom, they are slaves of corruption. The fact that they once knew Christ but have now turned away from Him makes their condemnation worse, but the Fathers pointed out that these false prophets were never really a part of God's flock. (From Hilary of Arles; Bede; Pachomius; Cyril of Alexandria; Chrysostom; Theophylact)

- 8.) T or F. God knows how to rescue the good believing person from tests of sin.
- 9.) T or F. The daring and self-willed do not tremble when they blaspheme the Lord yet the Angels who are greater in strength and power leave judgment to the Lord.
- 10.) What is meant by the term dominion? (see Ephesians Chapter 1)

## **2Peter 3. The Secret of Christian Living**

### **Commentary**

Peter is now stirring up the mind of those who have received the message of salvation. He urges them to be ready no matter if the Lord comes sooner or later. God created the cosmos forming the earth from water and through water. The earth was created from water as land appeared after the waters were gathered together in one place (Genesis 1:9). The world at one time was destroyed by the great flood of water. But, water can only work or cause destruction under the power of God. So, the false teachers cannot assert that the world continues the same throughout time or that the world is subject to natural causes. The Lord's time is one day is a thousand years. He does not measure time like we do. Just because Christ has not returned, does not mean He is slow about His promise. Rather, He is patient towards the world, merciful and gives mankind time to repent and be saved. The Day of the Lord will come as a "thief in the night" and the cosmos will be destroyed. All of our works will be revealed and our secrets known. There will be no place to run or hide!

11.) With the Second Coming of the Lord, what does Peter say the Lord will do for us?

12.) T. or F. Peter's reference to Paul's writing only means that both Paul's writing and the Old Testament can be misinterpreted.

Note: From the Venerable Bede:

“Peter records that Paul wrote to them, because even if Paul addressed his letters to specific churches, he nevertheless intended them to be circulated among them all, because there is only one universal church. Note too that Peter praised Paul’s wisdom. Peter, on the other hand, the first of the apostles, almost forgets his primacy and the fact that the keys of the kingdom were given to him and instead marvels at the wisdom which was given to Paul. The reason for this is that it is characteristic of the elect that they admire virtues of other more than their own and that those virtues encourage them to grow more deeply in the faith.

+++++The End+++++