

# Lawless Times

2 Peter 2:1-22

<sup>1</sup> 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 bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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; <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> 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; <sup>7</sup> and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked <sup>8</sup> (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)-- <sup>9</sup> *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, <sup>10</sup> and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, <sup>11</sup> whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. <sup>12</sup> But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, <sup>13</sup> *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 own deceptions while they feast with you, <sup>14</sup> having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. *They have* a heart trained in covetous practices, *and are* accursed children. <sup>15</sup> They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; <sup>16</sup> but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. <sup>17</sup> These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the

pollutions 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> 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." (2 Peter 2:1-22 (NKJV))

In several places in these scriptures, God has given us stern warnings about a season of time in which we will see rebellion and lawlessness and corruption and turmoil, such as we have never known before. And He calls those days, "the last days". And it is clear that we now live in those "last days".

Listen also to how the Apostle Paul described those days; this from 2 Timothy 3! He tells us,

<sup>1</sup> But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, <sup>4</sup> traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! <sup>6</sup> For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV))

Do these words not sound very similar to the warnings given by the Apostle Peter here in our scripture text? And do these warnings not loudly describe the times and the culture and the behaviors in which we now live, today.

And yes, mankind has always, to some degree, been like this, lovers of self, lovers of pleasure, without self-control, and on and on. But here in these words, God has a special warning for you and me regarding these times in which we now live, a warning that more than ever before, in "these last days", all of the corruption and "denying of God as the Master", that we might have once only associated with the unbelieving world, will now, more than ever be reaching its tentacles into the core foundations of the church, now more than ever, beguiling the naïve members of our churches and carrying them away into corruption.

And God's warnings here tell us that for the most part, those beguiling ways will come through the church leadership. Verse 1.

<sup>1</sup> . . . there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction. <sup>2</sup> And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. <sup>3</sup> By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words. (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Folks, please understand these words! God is making it clear to us that people are not necessarily safe even within the walls of their own church, that false teachers will worm their way into our congregations bringing with them "secret destructive heresies" "exploiting many naïve church members with deceptive words", naïve because they do not take the time to read and to study the precious truths that are within these scriptures, but are content instead with only listening to their preachers and teachers and special invited guests, and then also to their favorite TV bible teachers.

And yes, unfortunately, some of the most effective destructive heresies actually well up from within our old long-term membership, well-meaning but misguided Elders and Deacons, and preachers and teachers, men who themselves get beguiled into believing wrong doctrine, and then they pass those destructive doctrines on to the congregations.

How horribly wrong that is! That is why I say to you over and over again that you must always be ready to check everything I say back to these scriptures. I truly do not want to teach you destructive heresies, but like all men, I am subject to the same weaknesses as other men, and I might unknowingly put wrong doctrines into your mind. Please, be ever so careful!

May we again touch briefly on the teachings that are the "destructive heresies" of our current day. As we said in the message last week, in today's church culture, there is a strongly flowing trend towards "liberalism" in our theology, using such arguments as the "need to be relevant and inclusive". And in that "push" to be "relevant" and "inclusive", we move away from the traditional and literal interpretation of Scripture into "new" interpretations that are more consistent with and more favorable to "secular world views"; the open questioning of some of the most foundational of the beliefs of our faith, questions about such essentials as the Deity of Christ, is Jesus really God? Are the scriptures the "inspired", the "God-breathed words of God, infallible and inerrant? Is salvation by Grace alone? Was Christ really resurrected? And questioning if there is more than one pathway for us to get to heaven. Basic fundamental truths of our faith are being brought into question.

And again, most of us would immediately declare that we would never fall into those traps. But folks, as our situations change and pressures of culture and the workplace and family come down upon us, in our more desperate moments, we will reach out to believe things we never believed before. That is the way of the human heart.

And so, God, through the mouth of the Apostle Peter is here giving us warning after warning, to be alert and understand that yes, it is going to happen, in these “last days”, your faith and my faith are going to be tested in some of the most difficult of ways.

Most of the false teachers that you and I will encounter and be drawn too will most likely be people that we will trust, men with all the appearances of being the godliest of men. But they will be preaching a gospel that is not the gospel of our Lord, but instead, it will be a gospel that will meet some special deep need within our heart, a need that is outside of the righteousness of God, perhaps like some of the needs we have talked about over the past few weeks, family problems that never seem to resolve themselves, rebellious children that deny Christ as their Master, sexual perversion within a loved one, or even perhaps within our own soul. And those false teachers are willing to “change” God, so that God will seem to be a little bit more accommodating to our needs, introducing secret and destructive heresies into our souls. And we will like what they say. Verse 2,

<sup>2</sup> And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. (2 Peter 2:2 (NKJV))

Here in the words of this chapter, God declares, in detail, the sufferings and the due penalties that will be paid for such rebellion, both on the part of the false teachers and on the part of those of us who follow after their deceptive heresies. And here, God first deals with the penalties of the false teachers. He tells us in verses 3 and 4,

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. (2 Peter 2:3-4 (NKJV))

Note the words in verse 3, that God knows exactly what these false teachers are doing and is here saying that “their judgment has not been idle and their destruction does not slumber”. Folks, those false teachers will surely be held accountable for their deeds. They will absolutely get what they deserve. Here, God speaks of their due penalty, “hell” and “chains of darkness”.

And that brings up another of those destructive heresies by the false teachers. You cannot imagine how many times I have heard Christians, even right here in rural Mississippi saying that their Pastor almost never mentions “hell”. “Hell” seems to be too divisive a subject for some preachers to deal with. But why? It is because, if he deals with the subject of hell rightly, some of his members will get upset. As the old Mississippi saying goes, “we each have a dog in that hunt”! Or more plainly put, we each have something to lose, no exception. And we especially do not want to hear our Pastor tell us that we or perhaps some of our family members, our children or our grandchildren are in serious danger of going to hell.

Some might want to argue that these warnings given here in 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter are just talking about the false teachers going to hell. But that is not so! Listen to these words in Revelations 20!

<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. <sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. <sup>15</sup> And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.  
(Revelation 20:11-15 (NKJV))

Folks, according to these words, “hell” is a real place, very real. May I pause and ask you? Do you, personally, believe that, that there really is a hell, a literal and eternal burning lake of fire, the hell that is spoken about here, or has some false teacher in your past put doubts into your mind?

May I call everyone who hears these words to account, that I have declared to you that there really is a place called hell, a literal and real place of “second death” called hell. It is a lake of fire with unimaginable suffering, a place where people are forever separated from God and from anything else that is good. And it is heresy to preach and to teach otherwise.

Please listen! I love you folks too much to tell you anything but the truth that is given here in these scriptures. If your name is not written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life”, you are eternally lost and condemned to this hell that is spoken about here. It is very, very real and it is the sure and certain penalty that awaits anyone whose name is not written in the “Lamb’s Book of Life”, and especially these false teachers spoken about here.

And as if these words were not convincing enough, God goes on to tell us about the way He deals with many others. And please make special note that God is not that old “push-over” “grandfatherly” guy that so many today make Him out to be, those that say such things as, “surely God would not be so harsh as to condemn people to an eternal burning hell. If He is a God of love, He will surely make a way for me and my wayward loved ones to be saved.”

May I pause and say that God actually has made a way, but not the way those misguided folks want it to be. The way that God has provided is a very “narrow” pathway. It is through the shed blood and the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross. And no other way!

We only have a couple of minutes remaining today, but I need to mention these warning here in verses 4-6,

<sup>4</sup> 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; <sup>5</sup> 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; <sup>6</sup> 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.  
(2 Peter 2:4-6)

These words give warning that people will not only receive the due penalty of hell fire when they enter into eternity, they will very likely also suffer many very painful sufferings while they are yet in this life. Here, God speaks about the flood that drowned all the people except Noah and his family, and also how He rained fire from heaven to destroy everyone in Sodom and Gomorrah, horrible and intense suffering for the sins that they immersed themselves within each day, making them and example for others to see.

And folks, these days that we now live in truly are lawless day, filled with very similar corruption to those in Sodom and Gomorrah. And in the very last days of this earth, God will do a very similar thing. He will rain fire and brimstone upon the whole earth, destroying it and all the people that are left on it. Will you still be here to suffer and die that horrible death?

I'll close with this promise in verse 9,

<sup>9</sup> . . . the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations . . .