



We know almost nothing about the life of the apostle Peter from the Council of Jerusalem, in the year 49 (see Acts 15), until the time he wrote this letter, around the year 64. It is certain that he went to Rome. Being in charge of the entire Church, he, like Paul, had to go to the center of the Roman world, though their motives were different.

A very ancient tradition affirms that he was killed in the persecution of Nero, in 66, and that he was buried on the grounds of the Vatican Hill. Investigations carried out these past years have enabled us to discover a grave and bones with various inscriptions which are, almost certainly, those of the apostle, the first Rock of the church.

Thus it was a short time before his death that he wrote this letter from Rome. Peter had neither the genius nor the literary talent of Paul. Instead, with simple words, he addressed the Christians of the Asian province, where the first persecutions were beginning. Different from Paul, he is not concerned with clarifying or defending the

faith. He tries to encourage believers who are suffering by presenting the example of Christ to them and by explaining the consequences of baptism.

In this letter, everything from 1:3 to 3:7 is inspired by the baptismal ceremony in the early Church: hymns, homily on the ritual and on Christian life. For Peter, it is an excellent way to remind his readers that they are Christians.

The end of the letter tells us that Peter wrote through Silvanus, who had been a disciple of Paul. This may be why, in various passages, we find the same topics found in Paul's letters.

Jas
1:1

1 • ¹From Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ, to all those living as aliens in the Dispersion, in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

Jn
3:3
1Jn
3:9

²to those whom God the Father has called, according to his plan, and made holy by the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be purified by his blood: may grace and peace increase among you.

You have been saved

³Let us praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for his great mercy. In raising Jesus Christ from the dead he has given us new life and a living hope.

⁴The inheritance that does not corrupt nor goes bad nor passes away was reserved to you in heavens, ⁵since God's power shall keep you faithful until salvation is revealed in the last days.

⁶There is cause for joy, then, even though you may, for a time, have to suffer many trials. ⁷Thus will your faith be tested, like gold in a furnace. Gold, however, passes away but faith, worth so much more, will bring you in the end praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ appears.

⁸You have not yet seen him and yet you love him; even without seeing him,

Eph
1:19

Jn
17:11

Jn
16:20

Mal
3:2
1Cor
3:13

Jn
20:29

^{2Cor 5:7} you believe in him and experience a heavenly joy beyond all words, ⁹for you are reaching the goal of your faith: the salvation of your souls.

^{Mt 13:17} ¹⁰This was the salvation for which the prophets so eagerly looked when, in days past, they foretold the favor of God with regard to you. ¹¹But they could only investigate when the Spirit of Christ present within them pointed out the time and the circumstances of this – the sufferings of Christ and the glories which would follow.

¹²It was revealed to them that they were working not for themselves but for you. Thus, in these days, after the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven, the Gospel’s preachers have taught you these mysteries which even the angels long to see.

^{1Cor 2:4}
^{1Thes 1:5}

Be holy

• ¹³So, then, let your spirit be ready. Be alert, with confident trust in the grace you will receive when Jesus Christ appears. ¹⁴Like obedient children, do not return to your former life given over to ignorance and passions. ¹⁵Imitate the one who called you. As he is holy so you, too, be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since Scripture says: *Be holy for I am holy.*

^{Lk 12:35-40}

^{Eph 2:1 4:7}

¹⁷You call upon a Father who makes no distinction between persons but

judges according to each one’s deeds; take seriously, then, these years which you spend in a strange land. ¹⁸Remember that you were freed from the useless way of life of your ancestors, not with gold and silver ¹⁹but with the precious blood of the Lamb without spot or blemish. ²⁰God, who has known Christ before the world began, revealed him to you in the last days. ²¹Through him, you have faith in God who raised him from the dead and glorified him in order that you might put all your faith and hope in God.

^{Lev 11:44}

^{2Cor 5:6}

^{1Cor 6:20}

^{7:23}

^{Eph 4:17}

^{Acts 20:28}

^{Heb 9:12}

²²In obeying the truth, you have gained interior purification from which comes sincere mutual love. Love one another, then, with all your heart, ²³since you are born again, not from mortal beings, but with enduring life, through the Word of God who lives and remains forever. ²⁴It is written: *All flesh is grass and its glory like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flower falls, ²⁵but the Word of the Lord endures forever.* This Word is the Gospel which has been brought to you.

^{Rom 4:24}

^{8:11}

^{Jn 13:34}

^{Rom 12:10}

^{Jas 1:18}

^{1Jn 3:9}

Christ is the cornerstone

2 • ¹So, give up all evil and deceit, hypocrisy, envy and every kind of gossip. ²Like newborn children, seek eagerly for the pure milk of the Word that will help you grow and reach sal-

^{Is 40:6}

^{Jas 1:21}

^{Mk 10:15}

^{1Cor 3:2}

• **1.1** Notice the greeting, “in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” which is the same as Paul’s greetings.

This passage could be the preaching of a leader of a Christian community, addressed to adults who have just been baptized. In those days people were more preoccupied than they are now about their salvation after death. To those being baptized, the apostles spoke of the inheritance of God which was reserved for them and had been won by Christ in his resurrection: *Beyond death, sin and all fleeting things* (v. 4).

The newly baptized knew that their Christian faith was threatened and persecuted. To ask for baptism meant to commit oneself to Christ until death.

You have not yet seen him... (v. 8). Hope, love for Christ: the three virtues (or powers) urging Christians, go together. Christ came to glory through suffering. The Christian follows

the same path and already knows true joy in the midst of trials.

• 13. The logical consequences of baptism are developed. We cannot go backward; giving in to the evils of the world would mean going back to the slavery from which Christ delivered us through his blood.

Verses 22-25: here we recognize this *being born anew, being born from above*, which Jesus tells Nicodemus in John 3:9.

What follows is a call to live perfectly: not attached to the things of the present, but eager to live a useful and holy life before God, in proportion to what we have cost him.

• **2.1** Two words stand out in this paragraph: *stones* and *priests*. They speak about what the new Christians will be.

You are stones. God’s presence in his people is *the stone which stands out* and on which, all

Ps 34:9 vation. ³Did you not *taste the goodness of the Lord?* ⁴He is the living stone rejected by people but chosen by God and precious to him; set yourselves close to him ⁵so that you, too, become living stones built into a spiritual temple, a holy community of priests offering spiritual sacrifices that please God through Jesus Christ. ⁶Scripture says: *See, I lay in Zion a chosen and precious cornerstone; whoever believes in him will not be disappointed.*

Ps 118:22 ⁷This means honor for you who believed, but for unbelievers also *the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone* ⁸and it is *a stone to stumble over, a rock which lays people low.* They stumble over it in rejecting the Word, but the plan of God is fulfilled in this.

Ex 19:5 ⁹You are a *chosen race, a community of priest-kings, a consecrated nation, a people God has made his own to proclaim his wonders.* For he called you from your darkness to his own wonderful light. ¹⁰At one stage you were *no people*, but now you are *God's people*, you had not received *his mercy*, but now you *have been given mercy.*

Live a blameless life

Gal 5:24 Jas 4:1 • ¹¹Beloved, while you are strangers and exiles, I urge you not to indulge in

selfish passions that wage war on the soul. ¹²Live a blameless life among the pagans; so when they accuse you falsely of any wrong, they may see your good works and give glory to God on the day he comes to them.

¹³For the Lord's sake, respect all human authority: the king as chief authority, ¹⁴the governors as sent by him to punish evildoers and to encourage those who do good. ¹⁵And God wants you to do good so that you may silence those fools who ignorantly criticize you. ¹⁶Behave as free people but do not speak of freedom as a license for vice; you are free men and God's servants. ¹⁷Reverence each person, love your brothers and sisters, fear God and show respect to the emperor.

¹⁸Servants must respect their masters, not only those who are good and understanding but also those who are difficult. ¹⁹For there is merit in putting up with unprovoked suffering, for the sake of God. ²⁰What merit would there be in taking a beating when you have done wrong? But if you endure punishment when you have done well, that is a grace before God.

²¹This is your calling: remember Christ who suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you may follow in his way. ²²He *did no wrong and there*

those who neither saw nor took notice of him, stumbled (Is 8:14). In another sense, Jesus is the *stone rejected by the builders*, which becomes the foundation of a new building: this is the new people of God that arises from the remnant of Israel and then extends to all nations. Christians are the stones of this Church: *living stones* because each one shares the life of God, and because each one has an active part to play in the Church, the body of Christ (Eph 4:12-16).

You will also be *priests*. To understand what this means, we must read God's words to Moses in Exodus 19:5. God decided then to become present in the world and to transform the course of history through a people of his own which would be Israel. Peter tells us: "The real people of God, the true Israel, are you who have accepted Christ." We, who are baptized, do not form one more religion: we are an active minority and the leaven of the world.

We are priests in the sense this word had for

ancient people: those who know, those who risk coming close to God. We were made responsible for the mission of preparing men and women so that salvation may mature in them. People and nations may discover their common destiny and, in the end, admit that they cannot solve their problems without making the Gospel the Law of their whole lives.

A Christian aware of his dignity as a priestly member of the people of God, by sheer gift and grace cannot but *proclaim his wonders* (2:19). This is what evangelization is all about. These Christians are *a chosen race, a community of priest-kings* called to proclaim the Gospel.

• 11. Here we are invited to be model citizens, workers and spouses. If we are slandered, that is one more occasion to show the beauty of Christian life and that those who slander us are wrong. If the authorities begin to persecute us, this is not an excuse to disobey the laws.

Also see the commentary on Titus 3:1.

Mt 5:16

Rom 13:1 Tit 3:1

Gal 5:13 Jd 4

Pro 24:21 Mt 22:21

Eph 6:5

Is 53:9

Mt 5:39 *was no deceit in his mouth.* ²³ He did not return insult for insult and, when suffering, he did not curse but put himself in the hands of God who judges justly. ²⁴ He went to the cross bearing our sins on his own body on the cross so that we might die to sin and live an upright life. *For by his wounds you have been healed.* ²⁵ You were like *stray sheep*, but you have come back to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

Duties of husbands and wives

Eph 5:22
Col 3:18
Tit 2:5
1Cor 7:12
3 ¹ In the same way, wives must be submissive to their husbands. If any of them resists the Word, they will be won over without words by the conduct of their wives. ² It will be enough for them to see your responsible and blameless conduct.

1Tim 2:9
³ Do not be taken up with outward appearances: hairstyles, gold necklaces and clothes. ⁴ There is something more permanent that shines from within a person: a gentle and peaceful disposition. This is really precious in God's eyes. ⁵ This was the way the holy women of the past dressed. They put their trust in God and were obedient to their husbands, ⁶ namely Sarah who had such respect for Abraham that she called him her lord. You are her children if you do what is right and are not afraid.

Eph 5:25
Col 3:19
⁷ Husbands, in your turn, be sensible in your life together. Be considerate, realizing that the woman is of a more frail disposition and that you both share

in the gift of life. This will prevent anything from coming in the way of your prayer.

Rom 12:14
Lk 6:28
Ps 34:14
⁸ Finally, you should all be of one mind: share each other's troubles with mutual affection, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil for evil or answer one insult with another. Give a blessing, instead, since this is what you have been called to do, and so you will receive the blessing. ¹⁰ *For if you seek life and want to see happiness, keep your tongue from evil and your mouth from speaking deceit.* ¹¹ *Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.* ¹² *Because the Lord's eyes are turned to the just and his ears listen to their appeal. But the Lord frowns on evildoers.*

Do not fear or be disturbed

Is 8:12
Mt 5:10
Mt 10:26-31
Pro 3:25
¹³ Who can harm you if you devote yourselves to doing good? ¹⁴ If you suffer for the sake of righteousness, happy are you. *Do not fear what they fear or be disturbed as they are,* ¹⁵ but *bless the Lord Christ* in your hearts. Always have an answer ready when you are called upon to account for your hope, but give it simply and with respect. ¹⁶ Keep your conscience clear so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your upright, Christian living. ¹⁷ Better to suffer for doing good, if it is God's will, than for doing wrong.

Endure sufferings as Christ did

Rom 6:10
• ¹⁸ Remember how Christ died, once

• **3.1** In speaking to married couples, Peter prefers to address himself to women. Is it because he recognizes the importance of their mission? Or rather, because in the rest of the letter, he paid more attention to men who, according to Jewish customs, occupied the front rows of the assembly?

Why does he ask them to obey their husband? Is it because God wants it that way, or because the Church is anti-feminist and wants women to be submissive? This point was explained in 1 Cor 11:9 and Eph 5:22. The apostles heard and taught the revolutionary ruling of Jesus who gave women the same rights as husbands in marriage. However, since they lived in a male-dominated

society, they could hardly imagine or discover a new way of sharing between spouses.

In any case, they could not reform the male-centered culture of their time overnight. They were speaking for women accustomed to obey. Some among them understood their promotion (Lk 8:1), but it happened that they showed this with actions which scandalized many (see commentaries on 1 Cor 11:6 and 1 Tim 2:11).

• 18. In this paragraph we have the reference to "the descent of Christ into hell" mentioned in our creed: see also Eph 4:9 and the commentary on Mt 27:52.

Peter, using the expressions of his day, speaks

Heb 9:26 and for all, for our sins. He, the just one, died for the unjust in order to lead us to God. In the body he was put to death, in the Spirit he was raised to life,¹⁹ and it was then that he went to preach to the imprisoned spirits.²⁰ They were the generation who did not believe when God, in his great patience, delayed punishing the world while Noah was building the ark in which a small group of eight persons escaped through water.²¹ That was a type of the baptism that now saves you; this baptism is not a matter of physical cleansing but of asking God to reconcile us through the resurrection of Christ Jesus.²² He has ascended to heaven and is at the right hand of God, having subjected the angels, Dominations and Powers.

4 • ¹Given that Christ suffered in his human life, arm yourselves with this certainty: the one who suffers in his body has broken with sin ²so as to spend the rest of his life following the will of God and not human passions.

³You have given enough time, in the past, to living as the pagans do: a life of excess, evil passions, drunkenness, orgies and worship of idols. ⁴They now find it strange that you are no longer swept along with them in this ruinous flood, and then abused you for it. ⁵But

they will be accountable to the one who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶The Gospel has been preached to many who are now dead. As humans they received a deadly sentence, but through the Spirit they shall live for God.

⁷The end of all things is near; keep your minds calm and sober for prayer. ⁸Above all, let your love for one another be sincere, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹Welcome one another into your houses without complaining. ¹⁰Serve one another with the gifts each of you received, thus becoming good managers of the varied graces of God. ¹¹If you speak, deliver the word of God; if you have a special ministry, let it be seen as God's power so that, in everything, God may be glorified in Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Be glad to share in the sufferings of Christ

• ¹²My dear people, do not be surprised at the testing by fire which is taking place among you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³Instead, you should be glad to share in the sufferings of Christ because, on the day his Glory is revealed, you will also fully rejoice. ¹⁴You are fortunate if you are insulted because of

of the sinful people in Noah's time. For the Jews, they were the example of those who sin by irresponsibility and lack of real concern for the will of God. Yet, Christ saved them: he came for everyone, and not only for those who have been faithful or who had the chance of meeting him in his Church.

Note the comparison between the deluge and baptism: water washes away the old world, a life of sin: the person who comes to Christ begins a new life, striving for "a pure conscience."

He died as humans do but was raised to life by the Spirit (the text says, "he died according to flesh.") This means that he died because he had accepted and really taken on our mortal condition, but he had to be repossessed by the Spirit of God. It is a reaffirmation of the double nature of Christ. Compare with Rom 1: 4.

• **4.1** *Given that Christ suffered.* See Romans 6.

They find it strange (v. 4). We, perhaps, too easily accept to organize our life, as do those who are not waiting for the promises of Jesus; in our conduct there is nothing to surprise them.

The Gospel was preached to the dead (v. 6). This refers to the previous passage 3: 18-20. It is a way of speaking about the mysterious encounter that, after his death, Jesus had with the dead of past ages, whom he had come to save as well.

Live wisely and spend evening time praying (v. 7). Prayer requires a disciplined life. Go to bed when it is time and give up entertainments that only devour time and make us half-wits.

• 12. These verses present a summary of the central idea in this letter.

Let us note that Peter cannot concede that a Christian should have to be judged or go to jail through his own fault, murder, theft, etc. How many "Christians" in name only are in jail today? And, how many more should be there?

Pro
10:12
Jas
5:20

Rom
12:16
1Cor
12:4

Mt
5:11
Col
3:4

the name of Christ, for the Spirit of glory rests on you. ¹⁵I suppose that none of you should suffer for being a murderer, a thief, a criminal or an informer; ¹⁶but if anyone suffers on account of being a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace; rather let this name bring glory to God.

^{Jer 25:29}
^{Lk 23:29}
^{2Thes 1:8}
^{Pro 11:31}
^{1Thes 2:12}
^{Ps 36:6}
^{Lk 23:46} ¹⁷ The time of judgment has come and it begins with God's household. If its beginning so affects us, what will be the end of those who refuse to believe in the Gospel? ¹⁸ *If the just one is barely saved, what will happen to the sinner and unbeliever?* ¹⁹ So, then, if you suffer according to God's will, entrust yourself to the faithful Creator and continue to do good.

Further admonitions

5 • ¹I now address myself to those elders among you; I, too, am an elder and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, hoping to share the Glory that is to be revealed. ²Shepherd the flock which God has entrusted to you, guarding it not out of obligation but willingly for God's sake; not as one looking for a reward but with a generous heart; ³ do not lord it over those in your care, rather be an example to your flock. ⁴Then, when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will be given a crown of unfading glory. ⁵In the same way, let the younger ones among you respect the authority

of the elders. All of you must clothe yourself with humility in your dealings with one another, because *God opposes the proud but gives his grace to the humble.* ^{Pro 3:34}

⁶Bow down, then, before the power of God so that he will raise you up at the appointed time. ⁷Place all your worries on him since he takes care of you. ^{Ps 55:23}
^{Mt 6:25}
^{Phil 4:5}

⁸Be sober and alert because your enemy the devil prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. ⁹Stand your ground, firm in your faith, knowing that our brothers and sisters, scattered throughout the world, are confronting similar sufferings. ¹⁰God, the giver of all grace, has called you to share in Christ's eternal Glory and after you have suffered a little he will bring you to perfection: he will confirm, strengthen and establish you forever. ¹¹Glory be to him forever and ever. Amen. ^{Eph 6:11}
^{Rom 8:18}
^{2Cor 4:17}

• ¹²I have had these few lines of encouragement written to you by Silvanus, our brother, whom I know to be trustworthy. For I wanted to remind you of the kindness of God really present in all this. Hold on to it. ^{Acts 15:22}

¹³Greetings from the community in Babylon, gathered by God, and from my son, Mark. ^{Rev 17:5}

¹⁴Greet one another with a friendly embrace. Peace to you all who are in Christ.

• **5.1** In the varied counsels that follow, note what concerns the *elders*, leaders and pastors of the community.

In persecution Peter also sees a work of the devil, who does his best to discourage those who hope in Christ.

It is a proven fact that when we get ready to make an important decision or to make some commitment in the service of Christ, many unexpected obstacles arise. The person who becomes intimidated loses everything. When he tries again to take some step, the devil will

increase his attacks. These trials are common and to face them we need to be alert in our faith.

• **12.** *To remind you of the kindness of God (v. 12).* This kindness, or grace, means God's whole plan to save us, all that came to us through Christ.

Babylon: in the language of the Christians of the time indicates "the great city," the center of pagan religions, namely, Rome (see Rev 17). Rome already has a community, the Church, at the time that Peter writes.

2

LETTER OF PETER



This is the latest book in the whole Bible, probably written around the year 100, and it is presented as a second letter by Peter. Its three chapters deal with three concerns in the Church of that time:

- preserving the faith as it was taught by Jesus’ eyewitnesses;
- fighting against “teachers” who distort the faith at the same time as they lead to immorality;
- explaining why Christ had not yet returned.

1 ¹ Symeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been sanctified by our God and Savior Jesus Christ and have received a faith as precious as ours:

² may grace and peace abound in you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

We share in the divine nature

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and piety. First the knowledge of the One who called us through his own Glory and Might, by which we were given the most extraordinary and precious promises. ⁴ Through them you share in the divine nature, after repelling the corruption and evil desires of this world.

⁵ So, strive with the greatest determination and increase your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, ⁶ knowledge with moderation, moderation with constancy, constancy with piety, ⁷ piety with mutual affection, mutual affection with charity. ⁸ If all these riches are in you so as to abound in you, you will not be idle and useless; you will rather be rooted in the knowl-

edge of Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁹ Whoever is not aware of this is blind and shortsighted and is forgetful of the cleansing of former sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, brothers and sisters, strive more and more to respond to the call of God who chose you. If you do so, you will never stumble. ¹¹ Moreover you will be generously granted entry to the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

¹² So I shall always remind you of these things, though you know them and remain firm in the truth that you have. ¹³ It seems fitting that as long as I live in the tent of this body, I refresh your memory of them, ¹⁴ knowing that my tent may soon be folded up, as our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me. ¹⁵ I will, nonetheless, endeavor to see that after my departure, you will be constantly reminded of all this.

The foundation of faith

¹⁶ Indeed, what we taught you about the power and the return of Christ Jesus our Lord was not drawn from myths or formulated theories. We ourselves were eyewitnesses of his maj-

^{1P}
^{2:4}

^{Gal}
^{5:22}

^{Jd} 5

^{Jn}
^{21:18}

Mk 9:2 esty, ¹⁷when he received glory and honor from God the Father, when from the magnificent Glory this most extraordinary word came upon him: “This is my beloved Son, this is my Chosen One.” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹Therefore, we believe most firmly in the message of the prophets which you should consider rightly as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the break of day, when the Morning Star shines in your hearts.

2Tim 3:16 ²⁰Know this well: no prophecy of Scripture can be handed over to private interpretation, ²¹since no prophecy comes from human decision, for it was men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, who spoke.

False teachers

Dt 13:2
1Tim 4:1
Jd 4
2 ¹Just as there have been false prophets in the midst of the people of Israel, so will there be false teachers among you. They will introduce harm-

ful sects and, by denying the Master who saved them, they will bring upon themselves sudden perdition. ²Many, nonetheless, will imitate their vices and because of them the Way of Truth will be discredited. ³They will take advantage of you with deceitful words for the sake of money. But the judgement made upon them long ago is not idle, and the destruction awaiting them is not asleep.

⁴In fact, God did not pardon the angels who sinned but cast them into hell, confining them in the dark pits, keeping them there until the Day of Judgment. ⁵Neither did he pardon the ancient world when he unleashed the waters of the flood upon the world of wicked people, but protected only Noah, the preacher of righteousness along with seven others. ⁶God also condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, reducing them to ashes, to serve as a warning to the wicked in the future. ⁷But he saved Lot, a good man deeply afflicted by the unbridled conduct of

- **1.3** Christians tempted to become complacent are told two things:
 - God’s call is such a great favor that we cannot really understand it;
 - it is not enough to have been called to believe: we must confirm this election by a truly holy life that prepares us to enter heaven.

You share in the divine nature (v. 4). This paragraph, with the texts of St. John, is the strongest expression of what we are and what we shall be. We have not merely been called to a good way of life that will be rewarded, to love a God who will be grateful to us. Jesus has come to reveal who we are: his brothers and sisters, members of a unique Humanity that is to become part of the eternal mystery of God. He was made human so that we become all that God is, nothing less.

What we taught you... was not drawn from myths or formulated theories (v. 16). Faith is not based on reasons and theories. We believe in what the apostles saw and in the prophets’ words. It is true that through the centuries the understanding of the consequences of faith has developed, situating it within the realities of life; there has also been a constant effort to express what faith is in the language of our day. Nevertheless we continue holding and believing the mystery of Christ in the way the apostles believed and understood it.

The last sentence clearly says what we find in

the Bible: all that is there was said on behalf of God and all is the work of the Holy Spirit. It does not say that the Holy Spirit dictated the books nor that he granted revelations to all the authors. One same spirit guided all when each author wrote in his own style, and according to the custom of the time, what seemed good to write. Each author was aware that he was expressing the faith of his people, but was not necessarily conscious that he was inspired. Yet the Spirit arranged everything so that all the books make one whole that becomes a unique witness needed by humankind in every age. The Scripture is at the same time the work of the Holy Spirit and human literature in the language of a particular age.

Therefore, *no prophecy of Scripture can be handed over to private interpretation* (v. 20). It is true that anyone, according to his intelligence and faith, can understand one text or another. The message, however, is the whole. When we try to see how statements fit together, to see the important lines or discover the spirit of the Bible, then only the Church and those who are spiritually alive in her can discern.

The Morning Star (v. 19). This refers to Christ (see Rev 22:16).

- **2.1** This chapter dealing with false masters repeats, in part, the threats found in the Letter of Jude.

those vicious people. ⁸For Lot, a righteous man who lived in their midst, suffered day after day in the goodness of his heart as he saw and heard of their crimes.

⁹So, then, the Lord knows how to free from trial those who serve him and keep the wicked for punishment on the Day of Judgment.

^{Jd 8} ¹⁰He will do this especially for certain people who follow the baser desires of their nature and despise the Lord's majesty. Proud and daring they are not afraid of insulting fallen spirits ¹¹while the angels, who are superior to them in strength and power, do not permit themselves any injurious accusation in the presence of the Lord.

^{Jd 10} ¹²Those people are like irrational animals born to be caught and killed; after they have slandered what they cannot understand, they will end like animals ¹³and they will suffer the repayment of their wickedness.

^{Jd 12} They delight giving themselves to deprivation even in the daytime; they are deceiving you even when they are sharing your table. ¹⁴With their eyes always looking for adultery, they do not tire of sinning and seducing weak souls. They are full of greed – an accursed people.

^{Num 22:7} ¹⁵They abandoned the right way and followed Balaam, son of Beor who was attached to what he gained from his wrongdoing. ¹⁶But he was rebuked for his sin: his she-ass began to speak with a human voice, stopping the prophet in

his madness. ¹⁷These people are like waterless springs, clouds driven by a storm which move swiftly into the blackest darkness.

¹⁸With their boastful and empty discourses, they encourage the lust and impure desire of those who have just freed themselves from the common errors.

¹⁹They promise freedom when they themselves are slaves of corruption: for people are slaves to whatever dominates them. ²⁰Indeed, after being freed from worldly vices through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they returned to those vices and surrendered to them; and their present state has become worse than the first. ²¹It would have been better for them not to know the way of holiness than, knowing it, to turn away from the sacred doctrine that they had been taught. ²²In their case these proverbs are relevant: "The dog turns back to its own vomit," and: "Hardly has the pig been washed than it again wallows in the mud."

Why is the second coming of Christ delayed?

3 ¹Dearly beloved, this is the second letter I write to you. In both of them I have intended to remind you of sound doctrine. ²Do not forget the words of the holy prophets and the teaching of our Lord and Savior, as you heard it through his apostles.

³Remember, first of all, that in the last days scoffers will appear, their

• **3.1** Two generations of Christians had already waited for the return of Jesus: a similar hope stimulated their perseverance. Now false teachers refute the words of the prophets (those who announce an imminent end) by citing daily events.

They sow doubt showing that the apostles also died and did not witness Christ's coming. The response is twofold. On one hand, God does not measure time as we do. He may present something as being very near and not fulfill it immediately. On the other hand, if to us the time seems long, it does not mean that we can settle in this

world; we should make good use of the time given us for genuine conversion.

In our days the majority of Christians give little thought to the return of Christ: because we see it as a long way off, or because we do not understand its meaning? In reality it is always urgent to give ourselves totally.

The paragraph referring to Paul shows that already at that time Paul's letters had the same authority in the Church as the old sacred books or the Gospel, the "rest of Scripture." The Church was also concerned about the wrong interpretations that people might get from passages in which Paul did not express himself clearly.

Mt
12:45

Pro
26:11
Lk
12:47

Jd
17

mockery serving their evil desires. ⁴And they will say, "What has become of his promised coming? Since our fathers in faith died, everything still goes on as it was from the beginning of the world." ⁵Indeed, they deliberately ignore that in the beginning the heavens existed first and earth appeared from the water, taking its form by the word of God. ⁶By the same word of God, this world perished in the Flood. ⁷Likewise, the Word of God maintains the present heavens and earth until their destruction by fire; they are kept for the Day of Judgment when the godless will be destroyed. ⁸Do not forget, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day. ⁹The Lord does not delay in fulfilling his promise, though some speak of delay; rather he gives you time because he does not want anyone to perish, but that all may come to conversion. ¹⁰The Day of the Lord is to come like a thief. Then the heavens will dissolve with a great noise; the elements will melt away by fire, and the earth with all that is on it will be burned up.

¹¹Since all things are to vanish, how holy and religious your way of life must

be, ¹²as you wait for the Day of God and long for its coming, when the heavens will dissolve in fire and the elements melt away in the heat. ¹³We wait for *a new heaven and a new earth* in which justice reigns, according to God's promise.

¹⁴Therefore, beloved, as you wait in expectation of this, strive that God may find you rooted in peace, without blemish or fault.

¹⁵And consider that God's patience is for our salvation, as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you, with the wisdom given him. ¹⁶He speaks of these things in all his letters. There are, however, some points in them that are difficult to understand, which people who are ignorant and immature in their faith twist, as they do with the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

¹⁷So then, dearly beloved, as you have been warned, be careful lest those people who have gone astray deceive you in turn and drag you along, making you stumble and finally fall away.

¹⁸Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: to him be glory, now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Ps
90:4

Hb
2:3
Rom
2:4
1Tim
2:4

1Thes
5:2
Mt
24:43

Is
65:17
Rev
21:1

Jd
25