“How to Be a Big Picture Christian”

2 Peter 2:12-17

What is the most important consideration we must continually keep in mind from this chapter?

Truth matters and God takes it very seriously

Only through believing what is true can one have everlasting life in heaven

This is why Peter is so blatantly critical of false teachers

They were teaching one can believe a corrupt gospel concurrent with living a life characterized by unrepentant immorality and still be a Christian

Peter is therefore intent on exposing these impostors so people will not be lead from the right path

Let’s take a look at this outline, summarizing Peter’s condemnation of these individuals

False teacher’s destructive doctrines, vv. 1 – 3

False teacher’s doom, vv. 3 – 11

False teacher’s depravity, vv. 12 - 17

False teacher’s deceptions, vv. 18 - 22

2

Verse 12 is a very unflattering, harsh description of these false teachers

“But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.” (NIV)

Peter compares these individuals with animals who have no soulish perception of life

If you try to explain the most important realities of existence to an animal, they are not going to comprehend it

They are earthy creatures which can have admirable and even amazing qualities but they have no concept and understanding of the spiritual realm or the most important questions pertaining to this life

We must not extend this too far and conclude the Bible says animals have no value

Psalm 32:9: “Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come to you.”

Psalm 49:20: “A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish.”

Psalm 73:22: “I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.”

3

These false teachers were operating according to the basest, sinful instincts possible

Their insistence on living this way will only be self-defeating

It will result in personal corruption

They will earn what they have paid for through their unrighteous behaviors

The NLT says, “Their destruction is their reward for the harm they have done. They love to indulge in evil pleasures in broad daylight. They are a disgrace and a stain among you. They delight in deception even as they eat with you in your fellowship meals.”

So these false teachers have no shame whatsoever

They are only interested in self-gratification

“Carousing” = “the activity of drinking alcohol and enjoying oneself with others in a noisy, lively way”

“Spots” refer to moral blemishes and there’s a connection here to gluttony

To be a blemish means one is a disgrace to human decency

What these false teachers should have so obviously seen about themselves was in fact completely imperceptive through their own eyes

Those who deceive others have first deceived themselves

4

Furthermore, they were uncontrollably captivated by their own lust

“They commit adultery with their eyes, and their desire for sin is never satisfied. They lure unstable people into sin, and they are well trained in greed. They live under God’s curse.” (NLT)

The women around them served as objects for their immoral desires rather than people made in the image of God who were invaluable and thus worthy of the highest respect and honor

These false teachers were master manipulators to gain what they most wanted – power, prestige, and sensual satisfaction

To accomplish this they preyed primarily upon the ones who were most vulnerable within their sphere of personal relationships

It was as if they went to school for personal training in practicing covetousness

They had been able to master it in every way

However, remember God always has the final word

There’s no exceptions to this reality and these false teachers were actively and inescapably under God’s curse of judgment

To further strengthen his point on this, Peter goes back to an infamous O.T. character as evidence to prove what he has just written

5

This man was Balaam

He was a renowned prophet from the region of Mesopotamia

He lived immediately prior to the time when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land

Balak, the king of Moab, was very concerned about them entering his people’s territory

So he hired Balaam, promising him a generous financial reward to curse the Israelites so they would be under God’s judgment, thus weakening any threat they may have for His reign within Moab

Thus, Balaam’s enticement to do so was rooted in covetousness

It finally took a donkey being able to communicate verbally with him for Baalam to come back to reality

False teachers make promises and sound promising but they do not deliver

They’re like a well with no water and rain clouds which only blow by

Neither of these things provides the refreshment and nourishment which one would naturally expect

Again Peter emphasizes the ultimate destiny for these false teachers – eternal punishment

6

We must recognize false teachers will always be a significant threat for any Bible-believing church

Christians must practice diligence through discernment

Watch out for questionable behaviors which do not match with one’s profession to be a follower of Christ

Don’t give a person a free pass just because they have a long record of Christian service, vast Scriptural knowledge, a keen intellect, a winsome personality or persuasive speech

Look instead for a clear manifestation of humility, selflessness, honest transparency, godly restraint, moral purity and an incessant adherence to proclaim the true gospel in all its truth

Apply biblical, critical thinking to whatever preaching and teaching you are reading, watching or listening to through television, radio or the internet

Ask your church leaders questions when you read or hear things which don’t seem to be quite right

Go to the Bible yourself to personally evaluate whatever is being proclaimed as being true

There’s plenty of false teaching existent within our present world

We need to immerse ourselves in God’s truths through Scripture by personal devotions, intentional study, earnest prayer and involvement in our local churches