

"1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, 2 Peter 2:1-10, NAS95.

The main point of chapter 2 is expressed in four places. The last part of verse 1: those who deny the Master who bought them bring upon themselves swift destruction. The last part of verse 3: "from of old their condemnation has not been idle, and their destruction has not been asleep." Verse 12: "But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and killed, reviling in matters of which they are ignorant, will be destroyed in the same destruction with them, suffering wrong for their wrongdoing." The last part of verse 17: "For them the nether gloom of darkness has been reserved." The main point of the chapter is a warning that destruction awaits the false teachers and their followers. Chapter 2 is the other side of the coin from what Peter said in 1:10, 11. There he said, "Be zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never fall; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Here in chapter 2 he says, if you contradict the doctrine and the character of God's elect, you will fall, and there will be no entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord, but instead eternal destruction in the gloom of hell.

When all is summed up concerning humanity, we can never escape the fact that there are only two kinds of people in the world – those who know Christ and those who do not.

There are only those who make their calling and election sure, by seeking Christ and

His truth and looking to His promises in all things and those who will be destroyed by false teaching.

This entire section of the letter addresses false teaching, and false teachers and the results of both are destruction. This is just another way of saying doctrine matters, the unadulterated truth of Scripture matters. But for many it is not so.

In many churches, doctrine is not the essential ingredient in the body life. Feeling good about yourself is more important. There are churches that call themselves Christian and ministers that call themselves Christian and they deny the very basic foundations of orthodox beliefs about Christ particularly His divinity and Virgin Birth.

Here are a few quotes from the Seattle Times Sunday June 17, 2007

[file:///6http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/cgi-bin/PrintStory.pl?document_id=2003751274&zsection_id=2002111777&slug=redding17m&date=20070617](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/cgi-bin/PrintStory.pl?document_id=2003751274&zsection_id=2002111777&slug=redding17m&date=20070617)

"Shortly after noon on Fridays, the Rev. Ann Holmes Redding ties on a black headscarf, preparing to pray with her Muslim group on First Hill.

On Sunday mornings, Redding puts on the white collar of an Episcopal priest. She does both, she says, because she's Christian and Muslim.

Christianity has historically regarded Jesus as the son of God and God incarnate, both fully human and fully divine. Muslims, though they regard Jesus as a great prophet, do not see him as divine and do not consider him the son of God.

"I don't think it's possible" to be both, Fredrickson said, just like "you can't be a Republican and a Democrat."

Redding, who will begin teaching the New Testament as a visiting assistant professor at Seattle University this fall, has a different analogy: "I am both Muslim and Christian, just like I'm both an American of African descent and a woman. I'm 100 percent both."

Redding doesn't feel she has to resolve all the contradictions.

People within one religion can't even agree on all the details, she said. "So why would I spend time to try to reconcile all of Christian belief with all of Islam?"

"At the most basic level, I understand the two religions to be compatible. That's all I need." She says she felt an inexplicable call to become Muslim, and to surrender to God — the meaning of the word "Islam."

Though her parents weren't particularly religious, they had her baptized and sent her to an Episcopal Sunday school. She has always sensed that God existed and God loved her, even when things got bleak — which they did.

She experienced racism in schools, was sexually abused and, by the time she was a young adult, was struggling with alcohol addiction; she's been in recovery for 20 years.

Despite those difficulties, she graduated from Brown University earned master's degrees from two seminaries and received her Ph.D. in New Testament from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She felt called to the priesthood and was ordained in 1984. As much as she loves her church, she has always challenged it. She calls Christianity the "world religion of privilege." She has never believed in original sin. And for years she struggled with the nature of Jesus' divinity."

Redding's views, even before she embraced Islam, were more interpretive than literal.

She believes the Trinity is an idea about God and cannot be taken literally.

She does not believe Jesus and God are the same, but rather that God is more than Jesus. She believes Jesus is the son of God insofar as all humans are the children of God, and that Jesus is divine, just as all humans are divine — because God dwells in all humans. What makes Jesus unique, she believes, is that out of all humans, he most embodied being filled with God and identifying completely with God's will.

She does believe that Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected, and acknowledges those beliefs conflict with the teachings of the Quran. "That's something I'll find a challenge the rest of my life," she said. She considers Jesus her savior. At times of despair, because she knows Jesus suffered and overcame suffering, "he has connected me with God," she said. That's not to say she couldn't develop as deep a relationship with Mohammed. "I'm still getting to know him," she said.

In Redding's car, she has hung up a cross she made of clear crystal beads. Next to it, she has dangled a heart-shaped leather object etched with the Arabic symbol for Allah.

"For me, that symbolizes who I am," Redding said. "I look through Jesus and I see Allah."

This is a horrible but true illustration of what false doctrine breeds and it is as much a sign of our times as it was in Peter's.

We don't need to analyze these quotes if you have any understanding of the Christ of the Bible and what the church should be to identify the pervasiveness of destructive teaching by one who is called a minister of the Christian faith.

Peter's words were true then and now:

"1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." 2 Peter 2:1, NAS95.

To secretly introduce destructive heresies can also mean by subtle methods

either in their words or their practices, either directly, or by consequence of their doctrines or actions; they that profess they know God, but contradict that profession in their lives, are said to deny him, Tit 1:16 "They profess to know God, but by *their* deeds they deny *Him*, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed."

These things are not usually done in a Christian context overtly. They break down the foundational truths over a period of time. Let me give you an example of how a false teacher can validate his "ministry" in a Christian context by building a scenario where he convinces people he receives direct revelation from God.

He or she might say,

"The bible says" and then gives some teaching. Some time later the person will say, "the Holy Spirit taught me this". Then it becomes " the Holy Spirit revealed this to me" and then it becomes the "Holy Spirit spoke to me" and eventually it becomes the Holy Spirit spoke to me said, "Joe this is what you must tell the people." And then when

they tell the people, they believe that Joe has received direct revelation from God and so Joe must be genuine, even if what is said can be proven to be completely unbiblical.

The outcome for these kind of false teachers is a swift destruction. Now that may seem contradictory because these teachers are still teaching. Why hasn't God struck them dead on the spot? That is swift destruction.

I believe the idea is in line with 1 Thess 5:3

"3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape." 1 Thessalonians 5:3, NAS95.

When ever the destruction comes it will be swift because it will be unexpected.

"2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;" 2 Peter 2:2, NAS95.

The first part of this verse is all too easily understood. Those who follow the false teachers will end up the same way. Now not all false teachers promote licentiousness or sensuality meaning sexual immorality. Many may fall to its influence as we have seen so many times in recent years and there are pseudo-Christian cults that have promoted free sex and using sex to make converts especially during the Jesus movement days of the 1970's.

Yet, let me give you an example of a more "traditonal" church that is obviuisly led by false teachers and yet is "accepted by many in our culture.

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

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"You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." John 8:32

Introduction

Metropolitan Community Church proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ that every person is loved by God. There is no condemnation because one is gay or lesbian. Perhaps you are gay or lesbian. Perhaps one of your loved ones or friends is. You undoubtedly know persons who are, whether you are aware of it or not. It may be that

the traditional attitude of church and society toward gay and lesbian people causes you concern or pain. You may have become convinced that gay and lesbian people are shut out of Christ's realm and out of the Church.

Many people have been taught that the Bible condemns homosexuality. Metropolitan Community Church believes that this is not the truth. We believe that gay and lesbian people are completely loved and accepted by God.

How can there be such a difference between parts of the Christian Church over this issue? Largely because unproven ideas have been taught for centuries about some Scripture passages. In recent times, scholars have finally begun to study these passages in depth, with the support of historical and archaeological information about biblical times.

Metropolitan Community Church asserts the authority of Scripture. We know that there are some things that the Bible does NOT say. We are far more concerned with those things the Bible DOES teach us about God and ourselves. We are free to be ourselves and God will guide us in that. We are committed as Christians, to lives which follow the teachings and principles of the Bible.

There is no factual support for an anti-gay interpretation of Scripture, the facts are only quickly summarized here. Such brief statements cannot do justice to an interpretation of Scripture. There is a continuing and searching endeavour. But this summary is a starting place. It is an assurance that clear authority points to acceptance of gay and lesbian Christians.

Tracts which claim to give "simple" answers on this subject do a great injustice to the depths of God's Word. We hope that this brochure will begin to build your knowledge and understanding. We hope that it will inspire you to look at the subject in more detail. The book on which this brochure is based, "The Bible and Homosexuality", is available from our Church. Our staff will be happy to discuss the issues with you and to suggest further reading.

Here are samples of their teaching.

“Genesis 19:4-11: The sin of Sodom is clearly explained in Ezekiel 16:49-50. It was not homosexual behavior, but for its deep and general sinfulness, the men in the story may have intended sexual abuse of the divine visitors (the translation of the verb "know" here is not clear). The issue is not that the objects may have been homosexual but that it was to be abuse. This was in character with the whole of their uncaring, greedy and Godless lives.” Romans 1:26-27: This is the only passage in Scripture that apparently, talks about homosexual behavior among women as well as men. The dangerous, traditional interpretation comes from failure to relate it to the whole chapter. Paul talks about idolatrous people who put things or concerns before their devotion to God. As an example, he refers to fertility cult worship prevalent in Rome. The homosexual activity to which he refers is idolatrous. He implies that all of the cult worshippers engaged in it. (The interpretation that he is writing about homosexual behavior in general would force this to say that all idolatrous people become homosexual--an obviously spurious interpretation.) The final sentence referring to their just reward is a reference to the venereal disease that was epidemic among such cults. This specific reference to fertility cult worship cannot be construed to condemn homosexual behaviour in general.

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~cbidwell/UFMCC/freetobe.htm>

We realize that, at least at the present, homosexual marriages are not considered even legal by most governments and most churches that claim to be Christian. Civil unions are the same. If a church, that says it preaches Christ, caters to homosexuals and lesbians then it is encouraging immoral sexual behavior according to Scripture and these false teachers have proved to be licentious and so are those who follow them.

The way of the truth being maligned is not difficult to understand.

The way of the truth is the Gospel. To malign the Gospel is to speak evil of it or to slander it. That means any misrepresentation of Christ or God's way of salvation is slandering the Gospel. If a teacher claims that Jesus had to become the first born-again man after suffering in hell, as we discussed two weeks ago, then that person has

maligned the Gospel. If, as Ann Holmes Redding has done in our earlier illustration, a person denies original sin then they malign the Gospel.

"3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep." 2 Peter 2:3, NAS95.

Greed in this verse is not speaking of desire for monetary gain. It is the idea of coveting. They yearn to possess the hearer's minds and hearts with the stories they have made up. This is gain for them. The stories are so much easier than the hard facts of Scripture and especially in our day, these storytellers do gain financially as well.

They want to make merchandise of their followers and Peter stresses again that damnation is hanging over them.

Judgment will come. From vs 4-8 Peter uses the fallen angels, Noah's generation and Sodom and Gomorrah, as examples of those who met their destruction when that is not what they were looking for. These are explicit warnings that God does judge these matters whether because of pride, rebellion against God or immorality.

In these verses the righteous, particularly Noah (not necessarily those with him who were also spared) and Lot are spared the judgment of God.

But notice the contrast that reminds us of chapter one;

"9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment," 2 Peter 2:9, NAS95.

It is always God's intent to rescue His righteous and to judge the unrighteous.

Remember Peter's purpose. His aim is to stabilize Christians. By explaining the ultimate fate of those who perpetrate error among Christians, Peter will First, help the believers to resist the temptation to follow them in their sinful lifestyle. Second, he wants to expose the false teachers for what they are. Third, he wants to answer their charge as scoffers that God is not really going to judge men as stated later in the letter. Fourth, with the teaching about God's power to rescue and deliver the godly, He intends to comfort those struggling under the influence of ungodliness. He wants to encourage us to stand.

The doctrine of Peter's teaching is not difficult for us to understand and of the

purpose of his teaching gives us an opportunity, in context, to examine our own times and the heresies and false teachers that abound.

Judgment and punishment are inevitable. You may either endure the punishment for your sins yourself (that's what hell is for) or you may avail yourself of God's provision for your rescue. You may receive Jesus Christ and trust His substitutionary work on behalf of sinners. You may flee to Jesus as He is offered to you in the gospel.

He rescues His own and all others perish. Only those who have been truly saved by grace know the Way the Truth and the Life. All others are false whether teachers or followers and their end inevitable and inescapable.