

Article of the Month – April 2013

Missiological Observations in the NT (16) – 2 Peter

By Steef van 't Slot, Ph.D.



If we describe the main theme of Peter's first letter as 'don't be surprised because of persecution from *without*', we can qualify the theme of his second letter as 'beware of deception from *within*'.

The all-sufficiency of faith in Christ is stressed, as is participation in the divine nature.¹ Nothing else is needed for man's spiritual well-being.

In the next paragraph² Peter states that Christ's disciples are responsible for their spiritual growth. They cannot remain dependent on missionaries for that.

Missionaries do well to develop good teaching *structures*.³ It does *not* mean, that missionaries need to *run* those structures. Delegation of responsibilities to locals is part of indigenous leadership training. Teaching remains necessary, also for the spiritually mature.

The words 'when we told you'⁴ imply a visit by Peter, maybe even more than one. He probably travelled through Asia Minor noticing the increased danger of false teaching, against which he warned.⁵ He also discovered that not everybody understood Paul's letters correctly⁶ and that false teachers had perverted his teaching.

Peter was eyewitness of Christ's ministry;⁷ he had a personal testimony. This is an indispensable asset for every missionary because no unbeliever can argue against it. Our unique experiences with Him form an important part of the presentation with which we make Christ's person and salvation known to people that haven't yet come to know Him.

Peter stresses the necessity to pay attention to the word of the prophets.⁸ This deals with the opinion, prevalent in Evangelical churches today, that the Old Testament is of less significance than the New. The Old is a light shining in the darkness, causing spiritual growth ('the morning star, rising in your hearts'). Missionaries should teach from the Old Testament and instill a love for it among their disciples. Peter reinforces this.⁹

¹ 2 Pet. 1:3,4

² 1:5-11

³ 1:12-15

⁴ 1:16

⁵ Chapter 2

⁶ 3:15,16

⁷ 1:16b-18

⁸ 1:9-21

⁹ 3:2

Peter's catalogue on false teachers and their errors in the second chapter confronts us with the non-negotiable of discipleship programs for new converts. If missionaries teach the Word of God, illustrated by their godly lives so that their disciples can discern lie from truth, chances that they will accept false teachers decrease dramatically. Discipleship and thorough biblical teaching should be conducted on an ongoing basis.

Peter leaves no misunderstanding when he shares his thoughts about the 'once saved – always saved' theory.¹⁰

One characteristic of false teachers in the Last Days is that they ridicule the promise of Christ's return.¹¹ Smashing this hope for the future kills the vision¹² needed to reach the remote unreached.¹³ Denying that the era of grace will one day end, they position themselves so, that indeed the Day of the Lord will come to them like a thief.¹⁴ World Missions die where eschatology dies.

Our eschatological expectations (and calculations?) do not conform to God's time schedule.¹⁵ We interpret His patience as slowness, but He actually wants none to perish.¹⁶ This proves that more people are saved every day than there are lost.¹⁷ Otherwise extension of time would be loss instead of gain in terms of human souls and their eternal destination.

The Lord's coming can be sped up.¹⁸ Christ said that He will come back after the Gospel has reached all the earth.¹⁹ He will maintain that criterion. The nearness of His return can be measured more or less against progress made in World Missions. Progress goes faster when more people are sent out to the ends of the earth. Jesus tells us to pray for laborers²⁰ since all nations, tribes, peoples and languages will be represented in the Kingdom.²¹ Christ will not return as long as there are unreached people groups. This is a neglected truth in the Church. Is there so little longing in the Bride to meet the Groom? The cry 'Amen, come Lord Jesus'²² is hardly heard. How painful and shameful. Are we too lazy to finish the Great Commission and too indifferent – unloving, maybe – to crave His return? How much persecution is needed to change us?!

¹⁰ 2:20,21; 3:17

¹¹ 3:4

¹² Rev. 7:9

¹³ Matt. 24:14

¹⁴ 2 Pet. 3:10

¹⁵ 3:8

¹⁶ 3:9

¹⁷ 3:15a

¹⁸ 3:12

¹⁹ Matt. 24:14

²⁰ Matt. 9:37,38

²¹ Rev. 5:9; 7:9

²² 22:20

