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May 10th: Job 38 & 2 Peter 2

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The Lord addresses Job from the whirlwind. The character and the fate of false teachers.

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Transcript

Job 38. Then the Lord answered Job after the whirlwind and said, Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge, dressed for action like a man? I will question you, and you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements? Surely you know. Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone? dawn, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst out from the womb, when I made clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling-band, and prescribed limits for it, and set bars and doors, and said, Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed? Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn

to know its place, that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it? It is changed like clay under the seal, and its features stand out like a garment. From the wicked their light is withheld, and their uplifted arm is broken.

Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this. Where is the way to the dwelling of light, and where is the place of darkness, that you may take it to its territory, and that you may discern the paths to its home? You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great. Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war? What is the way to the place where the light is distributed, or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth? Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain, and a way for the thunderbolt, to bring rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground sprout with grass? Has the rain a father? Or who has begotten the drops of dew? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the frost of heaven? The waters become hard like stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Maserath in their season, or can you guide the bear with its children? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth? Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go, and say to you, Here we are? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who can number the clouds by wisdom, or who can tilt the water skins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass, and the clods stick fast together? Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their thicket? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food? In Job chapter 38, for the first time since the prologue, the voice of the Lord is directly heard. We might recognise some of the connections between chapter 38 and the preceding two chapters where Elihu challenges Job, sometimes in similar terms. In chapter 37 Elihu had discussed things like the Lord's power in meteorological forces and the storm, and now in chapter 38 the Lord comes and the world went.

The Lord's stormy advent on the scene might remind us of other appearances of the Lord in scripture, in places like 1 Kings chapter 19 where the Lord appeared to Elijah at Mount Horeb, or we might think of the Lord's appearance to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The questions that the Lord asks Job here are also similar to ones that we see elsewhere in scripture. We might think of passages such as Isaiah chapter 40 verses 12 to 26.

Statements from those verses include things like, Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who has measured the spirit of the Lord? Or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult? And who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? Later on, Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in. From the Lord's rhetorical questions to Job, a cosmological vision and a portrayal of the Lord's creative power and wisdom can be derived. The Lord's statements here should also be read over against such things as Job's own ironic doxological statement in places like chapter 12 verses 13-25.

With God are wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding. If he tears down, none can rebuild.

If he shuts a man in, none can open. If he withholds the waters, they dry up. If he sends them out, they overwhelm the land.

With him are strength and sound wisdom. The deceived and the deceiver are his. He leads counsellors away stripped, and judges, he makes fools.

He looses the bonds of kings, and binds a waistcloth on their hips. He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty. He deprives of speech those who are trusted, and takes away the discernment of elders.

He pours contempt on princes, and loosens the belt of the strong. He uncovers the deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light. He makes nations great, and he destroys them.

He enlarges nations, and leads them away. He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth, and makes them wander in a trackless waste. They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.

Discerning the tone and the purpose of the Lord's speeches is not easy. D.C. raises the interesting question of the tone of the Lord. Is the Lord being bullying? Is he intimidating, patronizing, or is he being playful with Job? Does the Lord, as it were, have a twinkle in his eye, or is he sternly rebuking Job? Clines, weighing up the different options, argues that the Lord's tone is, indeed severe and not at all gracious, yet not offensive and by no means cruel.

The intended message and the intended purpose of the Lord's speech is also something that divides commentators. How are we to make sense of it? We should probably begin

by thinking about some of the elements or details that orient or limit our interpretations. Reading the Lord's speeches in a way that just affirms the position of the Friends is untenable.

The Friends are later declared to be incorrect in their assessment of Job and Job is vindicated. On the other hand, Job is challenged. The Lord speaks to him and there certainly seems to be a corrective tone here.

A further thing to note is that in the Lord's challenge to Job, the focus is upon Job's words, upon what happens in the discourses, not upon something that Job did prior to the disasters falling upon him. This contrasts with the three Friends, though perhaps not with Elihu. We should also be alert to the use of irony, which can complicate the apparent meaning of the Lord's words.

Gerald Janssen, for instance, makes a lot of this in his interpretation of the book. We should also consider not merely what the Lord is saying, but what he is seeking to accomplish by what he is saying. Why does the Lord speak at this point? Why doesn't he just retain his silence? In answering that question, we should not forget the concerns of the prologue that the Lord expresses and the concerns of the dialogues that Job expresses.

In the prologue, the Lord set up Job as a champion, presenting him against the charges of Satan. And in the dialogues, Job was concerned to have an audience with the Lord. He wanted to appeal against the injustice with which he perceived the Lord had treated him, and he wanted to be vindicated by the Lord.

While he does get the vindication in chapter 42, the confrontation with the Lord does not go as he expects. He is not the one confronting the Lord, the Lord is the one confronting him. When reading the book of Job, we should always have in the forefront of our mind that these speeches are not occurring in some airless theological space, where everyone is just dispassionately discussing the Lord's justice and the relationship between that and evil in creation.

No, there are vital interests at play. The Lord is concerned to disprove the statements of Satan, and to show that his servant Job, in whom he delights, does not just serve him for mercenary purposes. Job is devastated by being seemingly cut off and abandoned, and indeed condemned by God, and desperately wants to be vindicated.

He has lost his authority and his rule within the society, and his counsellors and the society around him have now gathered against him and are treating him as a scapegoat, calling for him, an innocent man, to confess his fault. He wants to challenge God's apparent injustice, and for God to intervene in his situation and vindicate him. The friends for their part are in various ways insisting upon the traditional school teaching of retributive justice, but we might also discern some political motivations at play.

They are the political vultures circling. As the king is losing his authority, they likely envisage rich pickings if Job's downfall is complete. And some progress seems to be made in the book.

Job does not end up in exactly the same position as he was at the beginning. He seems to have been matured and blessed through the experience. As we read in James chapter 5 verse 11, Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast.

You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. In James's reading of the book of Job, the Lord has a purpose through all of Job's sufferings, not just to prove his point against Satan, but a compassionate and a merciful purpose towards Job himself. He wants Job, having gone through the experience, to be more than he was than when he began it.

Toby Sumter emphasises these themes in his commentary, drawing attention to the sacrificial elements, particularly in the prologue. Job is being set up as a sacrifice and through this sacrificial experience, he will be raised up to a new level. He is maturing into a new form of sonship.

Gerald Janssen makes a similar point. The questions, as from another burning bush, have to do with the issue of Job's willingness to enter upon human vocation to royal rule in the image of God, when the implications of that image are intimated in terms of innocent suffering. Like a later description of a son in the book of Hebrews, Job learns obedience through the things that he suffers, not as punishment, not even as correction, but as a means of learning steadfastness and endurance in faith.

The fact that God answers Job then should be considered seriously. God could easily have just ignored Job. If God's purpose was merely to dismiss Job, then he needn't have said anything at all.

The fact that God speaks to Job, even in this challenging way, suggests that he wants to communicate with Job, for Job to learn something, and by the lesson that he learns, for Job to grow. Let us not forget that the Lord delights in Job. Despite the force of the Lord's challenge to Job in these chapters, the Lord's fundamental favour to Job should not be forgotten.

Chapter 38 contains a number of extended rhetorical questions to Job, presenting in succession different realms of the creation. It begins with a question about the foundation of the earth. The Lord describes the creation as if it were a house or an edifice that he had constructed.

It has a foundation that's laid, its measurements are determined, a line is stretched out upon it, its bases are sunk, its cornerstone is laid, and there is a public celebration for its establishment by the sons of God, the angels in heaven. The varied terms here give a

sense of the many forms of competence that the Lord has in creation. He acts in mannerful, purposeful and wise ways to establish and maintain the world that he has created.

Job has, throughout this book, been trying to get to the bottom of things, but yet, he was not there when the Lord laid the foundations of the earth. He cannot, by his very nature as a creature, get to the bottom of things. He doesn't know what underlies it all.

Job is here being reminded of how much the creation is hidden to him. He cannot, by its very nature and his very nature, comprehend it. In verse 8 we move from the earth to the sea.

And the sea is an important image. The sea is connected with the primeval deep. The sea is an untamed, threatening realm.

It's a realm in mythology associated with hostile forces to the order of the world, a chaotic realm, always threatening to overflow the land and to undermine its order. The Lord describes the sea as if it were a boisterous infant. It has burst forth from the womb and the Lord has wrapped it in the veil of clouds and with the swaddling bands of the darkness.

The storm clouds and the darkness that veil things and are threatening elements to man are things that the Lord has placed upon the sea like clothing upon a beloved child. And there's something of the ambivalence of the sea expressed in these verses. As Jansen observes, the sea is both restrained and sustained.

It's treated like an infant, but it's also bounded. It's prevented from going beyond its limits. The Lord prescribes limits for it and sets bars and doors.

He observes the parallels between the sea and the limits that the Lord placed upon Satan in the narrative of the prologue. The attentive reader needs to recognize that chaos has a place in God's world, but it's a bounded one. The sea has a place in the picture, but that place is limited by the Lord, who is the master of the sea.

There is a lesson here for Job concerning his own sufferings. The world of God's creation is a place of both darkness and light. And in verses 12-15, the Lord asks Job concerning the dawn.

Does Job have the power over the morning and the dawn? When the Lord brings light, he dispels the darkness. And here the advent of the morning is connected with the dispelling of the darkness or wickedness. Tremper Longman writes of some of these verses.

The description of the morning light hitting the earth is powerfully subtle in verses 13-14. First, the light is seen as enveloping the earth so that it grabs the horizon. Evil is often

done in the cover of night, so the coming light is seen as shaking wicked people out of the earth, like a cloth is shaken to get rid of dust.

Verse 14 provides a second image. A seal is pressed on flat and undescrpt clay to produce meaningful impressions on the clay. In darkness the earth looks flat and featureless, but the light reveals hills and valleys.

Verse 14b is difficult but may describe the same phenomenon of hills and valleys by comparing them to the folds of a garment. Again, it is important to notice the analogies between this and Job's experience. The Lord created both the darkness and the light, and Job's recent experience has been one of deep darkness.

Yet the existence of the night does not deny the fact that God is the God of the dawn. He is the God of both the light and the darkness. He created them both.

Such a God can have a purpose for the time of darkness, even if it is a time when the wicked prosper and the righteous seem to suffer. In verses 16 and 17 the Lord asks Job concerning the deep, the abyss, death and the realm of deep darkness. Once again, these are realms of terrifying forces for man, forces that overwhelm simplistic accounts of the universe.

But yet they too are under God's control. Likewise the expanse, the dwelling of light and the dwelling of darkness, both of them have their place. The Lord knows them.

Job does not. Then there are the storehouses of the elements, of the snow and the hail, arsenals of the great storms that God can send on the day of war. In verses 25 following we might be reminded that mankind does not directly appear within the picture that the Lord is creating.

Man is being addressed in the person of Job, but much of what God describes occurs outside of man's vision. Perhaps the Lord is suggesting to Job that Job is not the centre of the universe. The Lord has purposes for his creation that far exceed his human creation.

He takes concern for the land where no man is found, for the uninhabited wilderness. And if Job would lift his eyes upwards, he will see the stars and the heavens that the Lord set there to rule. Job once again can neither control nor understand these.

In this challenge Job is being put in his place as a creature, but he is not being denied a place as a creature. The Lord, let us never forget, is speaking to him at this point. That alone is a truly remarkable thing for the creator of all these things to do to such a humble creature as a human being.

The concluding verses of the chapter move from what we might term the inanimate creation, although within the Lord's portrayal many elements of it seem to be very much alive, to the animate creation of the animal kingdom. The creatures focused upon in

verses 39-41 are not creatures that are domesticated by man. They are wild beasts and birds, the lions and the ravens.

They are also animals that prey upon others. As in Psalm 104, the Lord is involved in predatory processes. The Lord is the God of darkness, not just of light.

The Lord is the God of the underworld, not just of the overworld. The Lord is the God of the predators, not just the herbivores. The Lord is the God of the restless and fierce sea, not just the dry land.

Of the destructive hailstorm, and not just the light rain shower. Of the vast and desolate wilderness and desert, not just the habitable and well-watered land. All of this should teach Job and the reader that the Lord is involved and over seemingly chaotic and dark and dangerous and predatory forces.

They have their place within the divine order. But the divine order isn't chaotic, predatory and dark. The world is rich and variegated.

It has apparently contrary forces and elements, but they have their proper place within the whole, well governed and controlled by a gracious and wise creator. The presentation of the cosmos in this chapter has a lot more of a comprehensive character to it than for instance within Job's ironic doxology in chapter 12. Job's statements in chapter 12 presented the world as if the forces of chaos, darkness, predators and the deep had the upper hand and as if God was chiefly the God of them, not also the God of the dawning light that exposes the wicked in their deeds, or the God of the rain that sustains human life in the land.

The God of this chapter is a God who delights in, who sustains and preserves his creation, even in its contrary and ambivalent elements. And although Job has been appealing for justice, justice seems to fall out of the picture here. Or rather we might say that justice is part of the picture, but it is not all the picture.

The Lord by presenting the creation in the way that he does gives Job a way of thinking of justice as a part of the laws governing creation, but not all that there is to say about it. A question to consider, what things might we learn by reading this passage alongside Genesis chapter 1? Second Peter chapter 2 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness

to be kept until the judgment, if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah a herald of righteousness with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly, if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly, and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked.

For as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard. Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you.

They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children.

Forsaking the right way they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression. A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error.

They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.

For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them. The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.

2 Peter chapter 2 presents an extended warning about false teachers. They have arisen

in the church, and as Peter is departing, he wants to prepare his hearers to address them. The substance of this chapter is pretty much the same as Jude verses 4-16.

While there are several differences along the way, much light can be shed upon 2 Peter chapter 2 by comparing it with the book of Jude. There is a sort of typological necessity that the great exodus that Jesus brings about follows patterns found in the exodus from Egypt. In that exodus there had been false teachers, and now there will be false teachers again.

Part of the challenge of these particular false teachers seems to be a denying of the coming of Christ again. If the return of Christ is denied, and with that coming judgement, ethics start to unravel. At the end of the preceding chapter, Peter had presented the hearers with true prophecy, and the confirmation of the substance of true prophecy in the event of the transfiguration.

And now he moves on to the question of false teachers. Against the background of true prophecy, we will see what is the false. Richard Balkam suggests that the key characteristics of these false teachers as Peter describes them is as follows.

First, they are not divinely authorised. Second, they give false assurance of peace. And then third, they will be judged.

False teachers are already present, but more will arise. And this has all been foretold beforehand, so they should not have a sense that God's purposes have been thrown off. In Matthew chapter 24 verses 4 to 13 in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus had declared, that you are not alarmed, for this must take place.

But the end is not yet, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pangs. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

We find similar sorts of warnings in places like 1 John or in 2 Thessalonians. The word for heresies here might refer to factions. However, false teaching is clearly involved.

They deny the master that bought them. They have participated in Christ's redemption. They have been brought into the church.

They have experienced the truth of God in that context. They have seen something of the way that Christ transforms lives. These are apostates.

The church is not an unmixed group. The church contains both wheat and tares. This section of the chapter parallels with Jude verses 4 and 5. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. They practice and advocate a licentious lifestyle. This is likely chiefly seen in sexual immorality and greed.

As a result of their behaviour, God's truth will be blasphemed. When people see their wickedness they will speak ill of the gospel. They are motivated by greed and they will exploit the naive.

Their motivations are quite impure, but they have persuasive words and they can lead people astray very effectively. But yet their judgement will certainly come. There is no doubt that God will call them to account.

Peter supports his point with a succession of examples. In contrast to Jude, Peter's examples follow the chronological order of biblical history. He begins with the judgement of the angels of Genesis chapter 6 and then moves to the judgement of Noah's generation and then finally to Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot.

This parallels with Jude verses 6-7. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgement of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Like Jude, Peter here seems to refer to the sin of the sons of God in Genesis chapter 6 verses 1-4 as the sin of angels having sexual relations with human women.

This is also seen in 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 19-20. There is extensive reference to this reading of Genesis in the Jewish tradition. Jude seems to go on to quote the book of 1 Enoch in verses 14-15.

It was also about these that Enoch the 7th from Adam prophesied saying, As the book of 1 Enoch has an extensive account of the sins of the angelic watchers who slept with human women, it would be natural to think that Jude and Peter are working with the same reading. The language of sons of God is used of angels in places such as Job chapter 1 or Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 8. We see angels taking human form in the book of Genesis, for instance in the visitors to Abraham and Lot in Genesis chapters 18 and 19. These angels eat, walk, talk and engage in typical human interactions.

They appear to have genuine human bodies with ordinary faculties. They are not merely possessing bodies, like demons do. There is no reason to believe that prior to their judgement the wicked sons of God in Genesis chapter 6 did not have such human bodies.

While angels do not have sexual relations as angels, when occupying human bodies there is no reason to believe that they could not have done. The fact that it is sons of God having relations with daughters of men is also important. There is a sexual asymmetry.

Sons with daughters. It is not just an intermarriage of two groups as such. Here we should remember that the angels do not have male and female.

The angels are seemingly all male. We are also told of the mighty men that are born to the women. This would also fit with the mythologies of a great many cultures that have myths of such unions.

For Jude the false teachers are represented as those who have crept in, as those infecting the church as if from without. In 2 Peter chapter 2 they are from within the church. Both of these things can be true.

It is like the parable of the wheat and the tares. The tares come from without, from the enemy who sows them, but they are also within the field. Peter contrasts with Jude in his focus on the Lord's preservation of the righteous few, discussing Noah and Lot, whereas Jude focuses almost entirely upon the punishment of the wicked, Peter brings in this other theme of God's preservation of the righteous.

The flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are paradigmatic judgements in the New Testament. For instance in Luke chapter 17 verses 26-32, Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot, they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all. So will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

On that day let the one who was on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who was in the field not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. These stories are evidence of the Lord's power both to judge the wicked and to preserve the righteous.

They are examples of the judgement to come. Noah is presented as a herald of righteousness and Lot as a righteous man in a wicked city who was saved with a small

remnant around them. These figures provide examples for the church as heralds of righteousness like Noah and as those who like Lot are being grieved by the sin that surrounds them.

The mention of Lot may be surprising. He clearly has a very flawed character in Genesis chapter 19. However, Lot is also distinguished from the city around him by the hospitality that he shows, by his strong opposition to the sin of the men of the city and by his loyalty to the angels.

Whatever his failings, he stood out from those people who surrounded him. The men of Sodom were distinguished by their sensual conduct and by their lawless deeds. Ezekiel chapter 16 verses 49-50 God is able to keep his people and to mark out the wicked for judgement.

Peter especially singles out those who indulge their flesh in unclean lusts and those who despise authority. The focus on sexual sin and perversity is present as an inciting cause of judgement in both the flood and in the case of Sodom. Like the rest of the New Testament, sexual sin is treated as a matter of a special seriousness.

These people also resist authority, presumably the authority of God in particular, which lies behind all other authorities. They are rebellious in their fundamental character. Peter then proceeds to unpack their sins in verses 10-16.

Insubordination and rebelliousness, sexual immorality and greed. The false teachers are brazen and arrogant in the way that they speak about authorities. The startling thing here is that Peter is probably referring not merely to righteous authorities but in the first instance to evil angels.

Once again the Jude parallel is instructive. Jude verses 8-10 Righteous angels, even Michael, who may be Christ himself, do not revile the glorious ones, the exalted yet wicked angels. There seems to be an allusion here back to Zechariah chapter 3. The authority and the power of these wicked angels should be taken seriously.

They are wicked servants of the Lord and must be dealt with accordingly. We should take a similar attitude towards wicked human authorities. We must speak of them with a proper fear and honour of the authority that they have been given by the Lord.

False teachers are creatures of brute instinct and impulse. They are untamed beasts and will suffer the same ignoble fate as such creatures. They are like wild animals to be hunted.

These false teachers are also so given to sensuality that they revel in the daytime. This is not just the activity of the night. They give their whole lives to such things.

They are described as blots and blemishes, the things that would defile what should be a

spotless sacrifice. They pollute the worship of the people of God. We might here think of 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and Paul's challenge to the Corinthians and their failure to deal with the man who was sleeping with his father's wife.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. You must purge out the old leaven, that you may faithfully keep the feast. He describes them as adulterous.

Their eyes are scanning rooms for potential partners in their sexual immorality. They never have their fill of sin, they are always hungry for it. They are filled with greed and desire for material goods.

They lead unstable people astray. They give the impression that people can live for the world and its pleasures, avoid suffering, indulge the flesh and ultimately face no judgement from God. Peter compares them to Balaam.

In Jude verse 11 we find the same comparison. Woe to them, for they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. Balaam was a mercenary who wanted money and didn't like the Lord's first answer so inquired again, hoping for a large reward.

He was rebuked by his donkey, who stopped when he was prevented by the angel of the Lord and spoke the words that God gave to him. The concluding verses of the chapter are similar to those found in Jude verses 12-13 and verse 16. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves, waterless clouds swept along by winds, fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted, wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires. They are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favouritism to gain advantage. Here then he describes the effects of the false teachers.

Like waterless springs, they offer water but give none. Like the fallen angels they have been marked out for the gloom of utter darkness. They are especially dangerous to recent converts, people who are just escaping the Sodom and Gomorrah of the world.

They are boastful, they present themselves as superior in their insight. They tempt such people to look and turn back. They assure them that it is possible to retain much of their old sinful ways of life.

They promise freedom, but their own lives betray the fact that they are lying. They are slaves of their own lusts. Once again it seems that the focus is particularly upon sexual immorality.

Such false teachers can be known by their fruits, as Jesus declared. It is not entirely clear

whether verses 20-22 refer to the false teachers or to the people who are led astray by them. Ultimately they belong together though, and they share the same destination, so these statements could refer to either of them.

Their fate is a tragic warning. They are like Lot's wife. They seem to escape before looking back.

They come to some knowledge of the truth of Christ, but then they turn back and are hardened in their ways. They end up so much worse off, becoming more fully and willfully entangled in those things that Christ set them free from, and in the process more and more hardened and inured to the truth. Their apostasy reveals something about their true nature.

As they turn back, like a dog to its vomit or a pig to its wallowing in the mire, they reveal something about who they are, that they are like pigs and dogs, unclean animals, people who despite appearances never actually had the deep transformative work of the Spirit of God. A question to consider. Why do you think that Peter so emphasises sexual immorality in connection with the false teachers in this chapter?