

13. 2 Peter 3 of a Verse by Verse Study of James, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter

The false doctrine taught by the false prophets and teachers in chapter 2 concerned the second coming of the Lord. In this second epistle, Peter is stirring them to remembrance. In 2:12-21, he has established his right to remind them.

Peter's Authority to Remind Them

3 Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. 2 I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

They are to remember the words spoken through the prophets, the apostles, and the commandment of the Lord, Himself. *The holy prophets* evidently refers to the New Testament prophets (Eph 2:20; Eph 3:5; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:28). Contrast these to the false prophets of chapter 2. *Your apostles* would refer to the ones with whom they had had contact; therefore, Peter, Paul and, perhaps, others (3:15-16). The commandment of the Lord and Savior that is spoken of could be that concerning mockers in the last day (Matt 24:11).

The Second Coming of the Lord and the End of the World

3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Peter's message on the second coming is clear. *Last days* refers to the Christian dispensation (Acts 2:17). *Scoffers will come, scoffing* indicates jesting and mocking the idea of the Lord's return. They are walking after *their own evil desires*--not interested in the teaching from above--and saying, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? The false prophets and teachers argue that all things continue as they were since creation. Their reference to the fathers who have fallen asleep might refer to the first generation of the church. Men who had died since the establishment of the church (I Cor 15:18).

Peter answers their false doctrine and teaching. He says that they deliberately forgot the facts of importance in their arguments against the second coming. They forgot that God framed the worlds out of water and amidst water by his word (Gen 1:1-6). By which means (the word), the world was overflowed by water and destroyed in the time of Noah. (1 Pet 3:19-20). By this same word, the heavens and the earth are stored up for fire. The word *heaven* is used in the New Testament to designate three separate ideas:

- The air or atmosphere around the earth (Matt 6:26; 8:20; Acts 10: 12; 11:6; Jas 5:18).
- The universe (Matt 24:29-31; Heb 11:12; Rev 20:11; 6:14).
- The eternal dwelling place of God (Matt 5:16; 12:20; Rev 3:12; 11:13; 20:9; 1 Pet 1:12).

The heavens spoken of must be the first two, for the dwelling place of God, to where we are going if righteous, is eternal in the heavens (2 Cor 5:1).

This destruction will occur on the *day of judgment* (Rom 2:2, 3, 16; Heb 6:2). *The destruction of ungodly men* uses the word for destruction that indicates a loss of well being and not the loss of being. The idea is not extinction but ruin and loss. 2 Thess 2:6-9 explains:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do

not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have as one of their false doctrines the idea that the death of man is complete destruction. To them the death is annihilation, or a ceasing to exist. Their view is false for the following reasons. The meaning of the word *destruction* rules out any chance of loss of being, but means loss of well being.

DESTROY, DESTROYER, DESTRUCTION, DESTRUCTIVE apollumi NT:622, a strengthened form of ollumi, signifies "to destroy utterly"; in middle voice, "to perish." The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of wellbeing. This is clear from its use, as, e. g., of the marring of wine skins, Luke 5:37; of lost sheep, i. e., lost to the shepherd, metaphorical of spiritual destitution, Luke 15:4,6, etc.; the lost son, 15:24; of the perishing of food, John 6:27; of gold, 1 Peter 1:7. So of persons, Matt 2:13, "destroy"; 8:25, "perish"; 22:7; 27:20; of the loss of well-being in the case of the unsaved hereafter, Matt 10:28; Luke 13:3,5; John 3:16 v. 15 in some mss.; 10:28; 17:12; 2:12; 15:18; 2:15, "are perishing"; 4:3; 2:10; 4:12; 3:9. from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The view is not consistent with the Bible's teaching on eternal punishment Rev 20:10-15; Rev 21:8; Matt 25:46 where torment is forever and ever or literally into the ages of the ages.

The Certainty of the Second Coming and the Day of Judgment

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The second coming and the end of the world will come. Regardless of how it may appear to us, God has not forgotten his promise to destroy the world. A thousand years is as one day with God, and God does not reckon time as we do. Time has no effect on God, for God is infinite. Thus, to say because it has not yet happened, it will not happen, is absurd. To say that a thousand years is one of God's days is a misunderstanding of the passage. The passage is not concerned with telling us how long God's days are, but rather to show that time does not affect God.

Humankind needs to understand that the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise. *Slow* means to tarry or to be slack. Therefore, the meaning of the passage is that regardless of how long it may be in time, the Lord will still fulfill his promise. The Lord is *patient*:

Wanting is a deliberate exercise of the will. Therefore, God is deliberate in His desire for us to repent and in His waiting for that to happen. Repentance—an amendment, a change of mind, and a turning away and turning to—is here repentance from evil. From all of this, we must understand that the end of the world is sure to come and we ought to be thankful that we have a chance to repent. We should take advantage of the opportunity before the Lord comes with his angels in flaming fire.

The Utter Destruction of the Heavens and Earth

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Peter is very specific as to what one might expect at the second coming of the Lord. *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief* shows that it cannot be predicted. It will come unexpectedly and without warning. (Matt 24:43-44; 1 Thess 5:2; Rev 3:3). *The day of the Lord* denotes the judgment and the coming of Christ (1 Thess 5:2; 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:6; 2 Thess 2:2). Certain things will assuredly take place at the coming of the Lord. The heaven shall *disappear with a roar*. The *heavens* include the immediate atmosphere where the birds fly and the universe with the stars, planets, and earth (See notes on verse 7). The heavens will perish and the noise shall accompany the passing away. *The elements will be*

destroyed by fire. Used in the plural, *elements* signifies any first things from which others in a series, or a composite whole, take their rise—the substance of the material world is the meaning in 2 Pet. 3:10. *Laid bare*—meaning to loose—shows that the elements will separate or come loose from one another. Therefore, the end will be complete demolition of the elements constituting the universe. All of this will result from *fervent heat.* *And the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.* It is important to note that the earth will be destroyed and all the works in it whether by man or God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach among other false doctrines that the earth shall abide forever; that the meek shall live upon this earth. They say that the New Earth (3:13) (Rev 21:1) is actually this earth, new in the sense that it will be cleansed of wickedness. Their view is essentially that the literal earth is as permanent as God's throne; therefore, never destroyed (Isa 66:1; Isa 78:69; Eccl. 1:4). And the earth to be destroyed is Satan's visible organization of Human Society (2 Pet 3:10; Isa 3:19; Rev 20:11).

The fallacies of this position are that the second point is without foundation and is total assumption. Even the elements of the earth in this passage shall be dissolved and utterly burned up. The earth abiding forever can be understood in the literal translation of the Greek *into the ages*, a designation of a long period. Compare this to the translation of forever and forever, *into the ages of the ages.*

What Manner of Persons Ought Christians to Be

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

What will be the end of the Lord's faithful—those who come to repentance? Peter answers this question directly:

What kind of people ought you to be? Peter answers is rhetorical question, "*You ought to live holy and godly lives.*" The Christian's attitude toward the second coming of the Lord and the end of the world should center on *all holy living and godliness.* We should *look forward to the day of God and speed its coming* And we should be looking for the New Heavens and a New Earth (Rev 21:1; Isa 65:17; 66:22).

CONCLUSION TO THE LETTER AND FINAL EXHORTATIONS

14 So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. 16 He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

17 Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

Peter concludes with an exhortation to remain steadfast. We are to *give diligence* (see 1:5), to be *found in peace* (see 1:2), and *spotless and blameless with him.* The end of our faithfulness is salvation. Paul had discussed the same things in his epistle to them. Peter affirms that Paul spoke according to the wisdom given him. Paul describes this wisdom in I Cor 2:1-13). He spoke of these things (I Cor 15; 1 Thess 4-5; 2 Thess. 2). some of things taught are by nature hard to grasp. (Note that they are not impossible--Eph 3:3-5; 2 Tim 3:15; John 7:17). Here Peter says that what Paul wrote was scripture; therefore, as scripture his writings are inspired (2 Tim1 3:16-17).

Finally, Peter concludes that since we know these things, we must be prepared and not let the wicked carry us away to fall from our steadfastness. In contrast to this, we are to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.