

II PETER 3

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Peter chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God, and we finish up this second letter of Peter's. And the focus here is a warning against the false teachers that are bringing into the church their destructive heresies!

And remember who Peter is writing to. This letter that Peter wrote was to the churches in Asia Minor or the area around modern-day Turkey.

Also, keep in mind that Peter wrote this letter as he sat on death row in a Roman prison because of his faith in Jesus Christ. His martyrdom may only be a few weeks to months away at this point, so what Peter is saying is heavy upon his heart. He wants to give these believers the truth that will help them to grow by and not fluff! He is warning them of the dangers that these false prophets were teaching them.

Thus, in II Peter chapter 1 we saw the focus being to cultivate Christian character. We are to grow in Christ because God has given to us the power to do so by His Spirit through His Word. He has given to us the things we need for life and godliness. And as we grow in Christ, as we know more of Him and what He has for us, we will not be deceived by the false teaching that is out there.

In fact, he tells us in II Peter 1:5-9, **“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.”**

Thus, Peter is trying to stir them up, to make sure they don't become complacent in their walk with the Lord!

Why is that so important?

Because when you become complacent in your walk, you open yourself up to all kinds of false teaching!

Then, in II Peter chapter 2 we saw the condemnation of the false teachers.

In other words, Peter wants them to be awake, to be on guard because false teachers will try to deceive them into believing these false doctrines and these false teachers will be judged by God!

But make no mistake about it, they are slick, deceptive, their lifestyle is ungodly and tragically, many follow their doctrines of demons. And Peter wants to remind them that these false prophets, these false teachers will be judged, as I have said, but God will deliver the righteous before He pours out His wrath!

This evening, in II Peter chapter 3 the focus is on the confidence we have in the Lord's return.

Folks, when I first was saved, back in 1983, there was much excitement regarding the Lord's return.

Tragically, that excitement is gone. In fact, many churches are denying the Lord's return, or they don't teach about it because it is controversial, and we are seeing the results of that in people's lives.

There is no sense of urgency, of holy living. The church is becoming complacent and their focus is on social issues instead of bringing people to Jesus! And we see false doctrine in the church growing rapidly!

My prayer as we finish up this letter tonight is that excitement would return. That we truly believe, as the early church did, that the Lord can return at any moment.

You see, as we do it will affect how we live out our faith.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

The hope of Christ's coming was of paramount importance for the early church. In fact, its certainty was so real that first-century believers would greet one another with the term "maranatha," meaning "Lord, come quickly."

Instead of being frightened by the possibility, they clung to it as the culmination of everything they believed. Not surprisingly, the New Testament reflects the intense anticipation by referencing Jesus' return, whether directly or indirectly, in every New Testament book except Philemon and 3 John.

- Nathan Buesnitz, *Living a Life of Hope*, p. 122

And I do understand that some feel that there is so much more to talk about than the Lord's return. And there is, but you can't negate something that is so prominent in the Scriptures.

And what we see happening is that as the teaching of the Lord's return is taken away, Christians lose hope as they see that wickedness is growing at a rapid rate in our day.

And yet, Paul reminds us what our hope is in as he wrote, "**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.**" Titus 2:13-15.

Where is our hope?

Our hope is in Jesus and His return for His Bride, the Church!

Obviously then, this is important, and the Devil is drawing us away from this blessed hope and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ that Jesus wants us to have.

Don't let the Devil do that, trust in God and His Word!

Peter is going to give us a stern warning about what will happen in the last days in regard to the return of the Lord and we need to pay attention!

With that said, let's begin reading tonight in II Peter chapter 3, starting in verse 1 as we study through the Word of God and we see what the Lord has for us as we look at the confidence we can have in Christ's return.

II PETER 3

VERSES 1-2

I believe Peter is speaking of his first letter that he wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and now, in his second letter he wants to remind them not to become complacent in their walk. He doesn't want them to lose sight of the truths of God because of the persecution they were facing.

And Peter is telling them that he wants to stir them up, and, like I have said, not to become complacent in our walk.

And it is easy to do. You go to church on Sunday, on Thursday, maybe a prayer meeting here and there on Saturday. Week in and week out and you are just going through the motions. There is no emotion anymore. And that is dangerous.

God is always teaching us and if you reject that, you are in trouble. You are saying that you know everything that God has for you and you don't need to hear it again. Or, maybe you don't even agree with it, and that is dangerous as well as we will see.

And we are told that Peter wants to stir up their "**pure minds**" and the Greek word for "**pure**" is EILIKRINES, (i-lik-ree-nace') and it speaks of being sincere or "*tested as genuine.*"

The Latin word is "*sine cera*" and it means "*without wax.*"

And this is an interesting word. You see, at the pottery shops back then, if something had a crack in it, they would cover it with wax, and it would look fine.

That was until you held it up to the light of the sun and then you could see the crack.

Or if you were working on a project and cut off the nose of the sculpture you were making, you could get some wax and put it back on.

But, when someone bought this sculpture and they put it in their yard, as the sun heated the wax, it would melt, and the nose would fall off! Not a good thing.

Thus, some of the pottery dealers would place a sign in their window that said, "*sine cera*" or "*without wax*" letting their customers know they were getting the real thing, it was without wax, it was genuine.

Our minds need to be genuine, sincere, pure, without the wax or garbage of this world, the influence of this world.

But how can we accomplish that when we are bombarded by so much filth!

It is done as we stir up our minds, as we read and apply God's Word to our lives.

Here we see Peter tell them to listen to the prophets of God, what they said. He tells them to listen to the words of the apostles or the men of God.

And the key is this. You will see if a teaching or what you believe is of God or not if you hold it up to the light of God's Word!

If it is not of God, like the wax, it will fall apart in the light or heat of God's Word!

Paul reminds us in Romans 12:2, "**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**"

You see, "**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**" Hebrews 4:12.

Why is Peter reminding them to focus on God, to focus on His Word?

The reason Peter is telling them to focus on God, to focus on His Word, is because of the false teachers that are bringing in destructive heresies or doctrines of demons.

You see, they not only deny Jesus, His virgin birth, His deity, His death and resurrection, but Peter is now going to tell us that they also deny His Second Coming.

Listen to what Peter says next.

VERSES 3-4

Peter is telling us that scoffers, mockers will come in the "**last days.**"

Now, when did the last days begin?

They began with the First Coming of Jesus as Paul tells us in Hebrews 1:1-2, "**God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.**"

And these last days will continue on until the Second Coming of Jesus when He establishes His Kingdom, His Millennial Reign on this earth.

Now for the next question. Why do people deny the Lord's return?

Peter tells us it is because they are walking after their own lusts, doing their own thing and thus, to admit the Lord is coming back would mean their sin is going to be judged.

And so, they deny the Lord's return so they can continue on in their sin!

But today, and I am not talking about unbelievers here, and neither is Peter, he is speaking about believers and their denying the imminent return of Christ.

And their rationale behind this is simple and Peter tells us, and I am paraphrasing, ***“You have been talking about this for years and it hasn't happened. Thus, it won't happen, it is just talk. All things just continue on as they did in the past, nothing changes!”***

In other words, they believed what we now call uniformitarianism or that all the natural laws occur in the same manner, nothing changes, we live in a closed system where God, if He exists, doesn't intervene!

The dictionary defines uniformitarianism as, ***“A geological doctrine that processes acting in the same manner as at present and over long spans of time are sufficient to account for all current geological features and all past geological changes.”***

In other words, all the geological changes to the earth's crust have taken place slowly over long periods of time uniformly as opposed to suddenly thru cataclysmic upheavals (catastrophism).

Thus, the key to the present is to look at the past but they look at the past with a skewed view. And that is in complete opposition to the Biblical view that tells us that we live in an open system and yes, God has placed order in the natural laws, but God has and will continue to intervene in our lives, in this world!

This idea of uniformitarianism came into being through the efforts of a nineteenth-century British lawyer and geologist named Charles Lyell. He wrote a book called *Principles of Geology* which impacted the scientific community.

They now came to ignore that which they once believed, catastrophism or cataclysmic events and moved towards uniformitarianism.

Charles Darwin took that book with him on his voyage to the Galapagos and other islands off the Pacific coast of South America on the ship Beagle, where he established his theory of evolution, (1831-1832).

What is interesting is that the church is buying into this garbage and the reason is simple. Their minds are not pure to the Words of God but instead they believe the principles of this world, the philosophies of this world!

Here is the problem with that logic, in thinking evolution and uniformitarianism are compatible with Christianity. And let me say this, they are not!

One well known pastor disagrees that evolution and the Christian faith are compatible and not in conflict with one another and he offered this stinging critique of evolution. He wrote,

“To put it simply, evolution was invented in order to eliminate the God of Genesis and thereby to oust the Lawgiver and obliterate the inviolability of His law. Evolution is simply the latest means our fallen race has devised in order to suppress our innate knowledge and the biblical testimony that there is a God and that we are accountable to Him (cf. Romans 1:28). By embracing evolution, modern society aims to do away with morality, responsibility, and guilt. Society has embraced evolution with such enthusiasm because people imagine that it eliminates the Judge and leaves them free to do whatever they want without guilt and without consequences.”

Exactly.

Again, I can understand this from the unsaved world, but from people who claim to be Christians and they are denying the Lord's return, that is a dangerous road to travel. You can't pick and chose what you like and what you don't like in the Scriptures!

And if you doubt that this is dangerous, look at what happened as this theory of evolution grew, look at some of the things that came out of it.

- Mormonism in the 1830s.
- Millerism which morphed into the 'Seventh-Day Adventism' in the 1830s.
- Jehovah's Witnesses in the 1870s.
- Christian Science also started in 1870s.

And there have been many other cults that started around that time and since!

Warren Wiersbe sums it up like this for us. He wrote,

How important it is for us as Christians to understand God's truth! Today we are surrounded by scoffers, people who refuse to take the Bible seriously when it speaks about Christ's return and the certainty of judgment.

In this paragraph, Peter admonished his readers to understand three important facts about God and the promise of Christ's coming. . . . [God's Word is true – II Peter 3:1-4; God's Work is consistent – II Peter 3:5-7; God's will is merciful – II Peter 3:8-10]

Because God's Word is true, we must pay attention to it and take its message seriously. New converts must be taught the Word and established in the doctrines of the faith, for new Christians are the apostate teacher's primary targets. But older Christians must also be reminded of the importance of Bible doctrine and, in particular, the doctrines that relate to the return of Christ. Prophetic teaching must not lull us to sleep. Rather, it must awaken us to live godly lives and to seek to win the lost (Rom 13:11-14).

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 950

What Peter warned them about we are seeing come to pass in our days, scoffers are mocking and rejecting the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, the big question is, ***“How do we know what Peter is saying is true? Peter was not a scientist, so couldn't he be wrong? And if he is wrong about evolution or cataclysmic events bringing about change, then can he be wrong about the second coming? In fact, people have been talking about the return of the Lord for almost two-thousand years and it hasn't happened yet. So why should we believe that it is going to happen?”***

First of all, just because it has not happened yet, doesn't mean it is never going to happen.

Also, there are many prophecies related to the Second Coming of Jesus that need to come to pass before He does return.

But, as we will see, Peter is going to explain why he is right, and they are wrong!

VERSES 5-7

Peter's point is that God warned this world of judgment because of their sin during the time of Noah and the flood came.

And Peter wants them to remember that judgment because another judgment is coming!

Now I know, and I have heard the arguments against the flood, that there is no evidence for a flood, and on and on the foolishness goes.

Here is the thing, and Peter points it out to them and to us. It is not that they don't have the evidence to believe, but that they willfully forget what God has done in the past.

First of all, look at creation, it points us to there being a God. In fact, we are told that God created the heavens and the earth and all the life that is in it in six literal, 24-hour days.

The evidence that is out there shows us that truth. Look at the complexity of life, it didn't just happen but there had to be a designer, a creator and that is God!

That is what Paul said in Romans 1:18-23, that people will suppress the truth that is before them so they can reject God. He put it like this, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”**

These so-called highly educated men believe that absolutely nothing can gain information, from where we do not know, and it kept gaining more and more information until life came forth and through millions of years we evolved from an amoeba to man! Foolishness!

And because they reject God, they will be judged because there is no excuse, the heavens declare the glory of God!

But God not only created the heavens and the earth, but He brought judgment upon man in the form of a flood that covered the face of the earth.

We are told the reason in Genesis 6:5-8, **“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.’ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”**

Man was wicked but Noah found grace in the eyes of God and he and his family were spared as they were safe within the ark.

But the flood destroyed maybe some 5 billion people plus all the animals at that time. All life outside the ark, except for fish, even though many were destroyed, died in this judgment of God!

I know, some laugh at the idea of a global flood, but look at the evidence.

There are billions of dead things buried in rock layers laid down by water, all over the earth!

And folks, many geologists and scientists are looking at the evidence and seeing the remains of a global flood but many willfully forget or ignore this truth!

Think about this for a minute. This is not some coincidence! Since all of mankind came from Noah’s sons that means that all of mankind should remember the Flood.

Is there evidence for that? You bet. Of the more than 200 cultures from all over the world, each of them has a Flood story in their cultural history. It has been changed some, but the basic premise is the same.

Let me share a few things with you to show you that there is plenty of evidence for a global flood, and these are just a few things.

- Bones of whales have been found 440 ft. above sea level north of Lake Ontario.
- Other whole skeletons have been found in Vermont 500 ft. above sea level; and another in Montreal/Quebec about 600 ft. above sea level.
- Scientists have found marine life fossils at every level of the Himalayan Mountains some 19 to 20 thousand feet high proving that at one time these mountains were at sea level and covered with water before they were thrust up.
- Marine life fossils have also been found in the Salt Lake area and in deserts and inland areas all over the world, which has caused experts to conclude that at one time these areas were under water.
- Rapid burial of plants and animals.
- Rapidly deposited sediment layers spread across vast areas.

Again, those are just a few, the geological evidence is overwhelming for a universal worldwide flood.

And when you look at the massive fossil records that we have, it points to a flood as Henry Morris tells us, “. . . *the preservation of fossils requires rapid burial and lithification, or else they will be destroyed by decay or scavengers.*”

And remember, they believe in uniformitarianism or that everything just continues on, no big cataclysmic events. And yet, when you ask them what happened to the dinosaur, they speculate it was a catastrophic event. They will use it only when it suits them and thus, they *willfully forget!*

And please understand, they don't want to believe in God. Listen to what a New York University philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote in his book, *The Last Word*.

I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God . . . it's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want a universe to be like that.

- Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, p. 130

That is pretty clear – he is willfully forgetting what has taken place, he is suppressing the truth and hoping he is right that there is no God, even though the evidence is overwhelming that there is. How sad and many feel the same way!

And so, what we have seen with the flood of Noah is that God intervened before and brought judgment upon an evil world and He is going to do it again, not with a flood but with fire!

How do I know that?

Because of the past and the evidence showing that what God has said has taken place, His Word is true and thus, what He says of the future will be true also!

But right now, God is holding this world together. That is what Paul tells us in Colossians 1:17, “**And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.**”

The Living Bible puts this verse like this, “**He was before all else began and it is his power that holds everything together.**”

And in Hebrews 1:3 Paul tells us, “**who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.**”

Now some may laugh at that, God holding everything together. But think about Coulomb's Law of Electricity that shows like charges repel each other and opposite charges attract each other.

Now think of an atom that has protons in the nucleus and electrons orbiting around it.

What holds those protons together? We aren't sure and the scientists tell us that maybe it is "*atomic glue*" or something like that.

But there is a tremendous amount of power in that nucleus of the atom!

Let me put this into perspective for you on how powerful these forces are and even more amazing, how in the world do they even stay together.

If you were to take one tablespoon of positive charges and place them on the North Pole and then take another tablespoon of positive charges and place them on the South Pole, keeping in mind that like charges repel each other.

Also note that the diameter between the poles, if you could cut right through the earth, is 7,899.80 miles apart.

In saying that, it would take 30 thousand tons of pressure on each of the poles to keep them from pushing away from each other!

So what holds them together?

Not what but who, and laugh if you want, but it is Jesus Christ and when He let's go, well, Peter will tell us in a few verses what takes place when He does!

I will give you a hint, it goes ***BOOM!***

And, in speaking of this judgement, Peter is going to talk about the Day of the Lord!

VERSES 8-9

Why hasn't God judged this earth again?

There are two points that Peter makes regarding this.

First, God's timetable is different than ours. God is outside the space/time domain and thus, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day.

Peter is using Psalm 90:4 where the Psalmist tells us, "**For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.**"

Again, God is outside the space/time domain!

Now in saying that, please understand that God will judge in His perfect timing and the reason He hasn't done so yet is because He is longsuffering, and His desire is that all would be saved.

That is the second reason, He is allowing people the chance to enter into a relationship with Him. You see, He gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked!

And think about this, if the Lord returned back in 1967 during Israel's Six Day War, I would not be saved, what about you?

Thank God He is longsuffering. He gives people every opportunity to be saved, but it is their choice!

Clarke put it like this, "As God is not willing that any should perish, and as he is willing that all should come to repentance, consequently he has never devised nor decreed the damnation of any man, nor has he rendered it impossible for any soul to be saved."

And please understand that God does not send anyone to Hell. They go there because of the choice they have made, by rejecting Jesus.

He has every right to send every one of us to Hell, but by His grace and mercy He saved us by the shed blood of Jesus on the cross of Calvary, paying in full the penalty for our sins. But we must appropriate that gift into our lives by faith and if we don't, then, by our choice, we will spend an eternity apart from Christ in the Lake of Fire!

And because of the wait, many reject this coming judgment. But make no mistake about it, there is coming a day when His grace will come to an end and then judgment will come.

In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 11:25, **“For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”**

In other words, when the last gentile is saved, God will Rapture His Bride to Himself, He will pour out His Spirit upon the Jewish people and His judgment will come upon this Christ rejecting world!

We long for that day but again, until then, let us go into the highways and byways and compel people to come into the kingdom of God!

VERSE 10

To understand what is taking place here we have to understand what this phrase, **“The Day of the Lord”** is all about.

Please understand that this is not speaking of a literal day, but it is speaking of a period of time!

And here is where many are confused.

The Day of the Lord begins with Jesus breaking the first seal spoken of in Revelation 6:1-

2.

And, as Peter tells us, it is going to end with the destruction of the present material universe by God, spoken of in II Peter 3:12 and He will create a “**new heavens and a new earth**” that is spoken of by Peter here in II Peter 3:13.

Again, not a literal day but a period of time!

And I think this follows a Jewish day. Let me explain.

The Jewish day ran from sundown to sundown and thus, it started in darkness and it ended in darkness. And that is what the Day of the Lord is all about, it will start in the darkness of the Tribulation Period and move into the Kingdom Age where there is the light of God that permeates the land, and end in the darkness of the Great White Throne Judgment! It is after this that God creates a new heaven and a new earth! In other words, the eternal state!

Now what about the Lord coming as a thief in the night, how does that fit in?

Listen to what Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:1-5, “**But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, ‘Peace and safety!’ then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.**”

Paul starts out by speaking to believers as he says “**you**” and thus, this Day of the Lord should not come as a surprise, we see what is happening and we know the season we are in, and the Lord is coming for His Bride, the Church!

From there Paul now starts speaking of “they” and it is speaking of unbelievers and they will be unaware of this coming judgment. It will come upon them suddenly and they will not escape!

Again, for those not waiting for His coming it will be a surprise to them just as it was for those who were drowned in the flood of God’s judgment during the days of Noah.

For 120 years they heard of the coming judgment from Noah and they refused to listen, and we see God’s grace for almost 2,000 years now, but His judgment is coming and many still refuse to listen.

And here Peter moves on to the culmination of history you might say. He goes past the end of the Tribulation Period, past the Millennial reign of Christ, past the Great White Throne Judgment to the creation of a new heavens and a new earth where we will dwell with the Lord forever, sin will be done away with completely!

Today the big push is to stop global warming. Remember Al Gore and his movie promoting this cause. And I have to share this with you, it is too funny and very sad.

USA Today had a front-page news story by Elizabeth Weise and cited “forest ecologist” Glenn Juday with this alarming data: “Since the 1970s, climate change has doubled the growing season in some places and raised the state temperatures 6 degrees in the winter and 3.5 average annually since 1950, says Juday, a professor at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks.”

That should be alarming news to you. You should be terrified because if her data is true, if her facts are right, if the annual winter temperature in Alaska has increased 6 degrees Fahrenheit annually since 1950, it means that the average winter temperature in Alaska is 336 degrees higher than they were in 1950!

People need to listen to what is being said, right!

Isn't it amazing the garbage people read and believe and yet, when it comes to God's Word they just laugh, they think it is a joke!

Folks, it is no joke! God says what He means and means what He says and if you want to deny the coming judgment, you can. But it is not going to change the facts, His judgment is coming just as it came in the days of Noah only this time it will not be by a flood, but by fire!

I guess you could call it global warming!

Back on December 2, 1942 – at the University of Chicago's Stagg field – Robert Oppenheimer, Enrico Fermi, and Albert Einstein tested their theory that if Uranium 235 was bombarded with neutrons, energy was released.

Then on July 16, 1945 in the deserts of New Mexico, the first nuclear device was tested, and it melted the 10-inch metal that was used to drop it. Debris shot several miles into the air and 1800 yards in every direction.

Not only that, but the sand, for 800 yards around the test site, turned to glass!

Then, in August of 1945 the atom bomb was dropped over the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki!

Folks, when the Lord lets go there will be a thermal nuclear reaction beyond belief. But out of that, a new heaven and a new earth will be created as Isaiah 65:17 tells us, “**For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.**”

Listen to how Warren Wiersbe sums this up for us. He wrote,

We do not know when it will happen, but we are told what will happen. Kenneth Wuest gives an accurate and graphic translation of these words: “In which the heavens with a rushing noise will be dissolved, and the elements being scorched will be dissolved, and the earth also and the works in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

Many Bible students believe that Peter here described the action of atomic energy being released by God. The word translated a great noise in the King James Version means “with a hissing and a crackling sound.” When the atomic bomb was tested in the Nevada desert, more than one reporter said that the explosion gave forth “a whirring sound,” or a “crackling sound.” The Greek word Peter used was commonly used by the people for the whirring of a bird’s wings or the hissing of a snake.

The word melt in 2 Peter 3:10 means “to disintegrate, to be dissolved.” It carries the idea of something being broken down into its basic elements, and that is what happens when atomic energy is released. “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” said our Lord (Matt 24:35), and it appears that this may happen by the release of the atomic power stored in the elements that make up the world. The heavens and earth are “stored with fire” (2 Peter 3:7, Wuest), and only God can release it.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 953

And now Peter wants what he has told us to sink in and to think about what this should cause us to do, how we should live out our faith. Look at what he goes on to say.

VERSES 11-13

This is a great perspective to have, especially in the days we are living in when we have seen so much evil growing and so much of our freedoms being taken away, and it is easy to get angry and bitter.

But notice what Peter is telling us. Since the Lord is coming back, since all the worldly things are going to be destroyed, live accordingly, live holy lives.

You see, why hold on to the things of this world so tightly when they are going to be destroyed?

John put it this way in I John 2:15-17, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

In other words, how foolish we are to invest everything in things we can't keep, when we can invest in the things we can't lose, things which are eternal.

We need to keep in mind that this is not our home, we are just passing through. Our citizenship is in heaven and thus, live accordingly!

And that phrase, **“what manner of persons ought you to be”** is better translated, **“how astonishingly excellent you ought to be.”**

I love that because it truly shows us what we are to be like. You see, the return of Christ, the imminent return of Jesus should have an impact upon our lives! It should cause us to live holy lives, we should live in a way that honors God!

Paul tells us in Titus 2:11-14, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”**

If your hope is in this world you will be disappointed, and it will be seen in the way you act and the things that you say.

But, if your hope is in Christ and His return, you will be blessed.

It is as John tells us in Revelation 21:1, what we are looking forward to, **“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”**

You see, righteousness will fill the land, there will be no more sin, no more sickness and we will be with the Lord!

Thus, **“how astonishingly excellent you ought to be.”**

Now, what is the difference between the **“day of God”** and the **“day of the Lord”**?

I am not sure there is a difference and specifically here we see the destruction of the heaven and earth and then, as we move into II Peter 3:13 a new heaven and earth created, the eternal state with God.

So maybe this is looking forward to the final eternal state when all the enemies of God have been subdued and God creates a new heaven and a new earth for us to dwell in with Him.

VERSES 14-15a

Remember what Peter said of the false teachers back in II Peter 2:10-15a, **“and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray . . .”**

Thus, Peter is telling us to be prepared, to be looking for the Lord which will cause us to live holy lives. Don't follow the ways of the unsaved, don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by God! Let your light shine in this dark world, the Lord is coming back!

And I don't know about you, but I am so thankful that God is longsuffering, or I would have been toast long ago. He is patient, He is longsuffering, but don't see His longsuffering as He is not going to judge this world. As we have seen, judgment is coming and as I look at what is going on in this country and the world, I can't imagine it being too much longer before we are called home.

And I know it is hard when you see what is going on. But look at what Peter is telling us here. In the midst of dark times, of persecution, we can have peace because we know this suffering is only for a while, the Lord is coming back, thus, live accordingly!

VERSES 15b-16

Remember what Paul said to Peter in Galatians 2:11-21, **“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”**

Paul rebuked Peter for his compromise, for not eating with the Gentile believers when the Jews came.

And, as you can see, Peter was not angry with Paul, he did not hold it against him but took the rebuke to heart and loved Paul.

And Paul did it in front of all not to destroy Peter, but to show him his hypocrisy and to encourage the Gentile believers that there is no longer a wall of separation between Jew and Gentile because Jesus has torn down that wall!

What a great lesson for us, to learn from our mistakes, errors and not be angry with those who may rebuke us!

Peter also tells us that some of the things that Paul spoke of; some of the things he wrote, were difficult to understand!

Peter is not saying we can't understand what Paul is saying but that some things Paul says are complex, they are deeper than the others.

Now, what ends up happening is false teachers come along and twist the Scriptures to fit their agenda.

That is why you can have homosexual and lesbian pastors, gay churches, churches promoting unbiblical doctrine because they twist the Scriptures.

Thus, study the Scriptures so you know the truths of God and won't be misled by these false teachers with their false doctrines!

William MacDonald put it like this, "Some Bible truths are hard to understand, such as the Trinity, God's election and man's free will, the mystery of suffering, etc. It should not disturb us if we find matters in the Bible which are above our understanding. The word of God is infinite and inexhaustible. In studying it we must always be willing to give God credit for knowing things which we can never fully fathom."

Also note that Peter considered the writings of Paul as part of the Scriptures so don't listen to the foolishness of man that tries to deny the Scriptures, Peter understood that Paul's writings were inspired, as well as the entire Word of God, and so must we!

VERSES 17-18

Here is the warning as Peter prepares to be put to death. You know the truths of God, you have been taught the truths of God, thus, don't turn away from them!

And the way we maintain our steadfastness is to keep walking faithfully in the truth of God's Word. Don't "**fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.**" How important that is for us to understand and to maintain that steadfastness of faith!

Continue to grow, that is what the Greek is saying here. Never stop but keep on growing in the grace of God.

Grace means undeserved favor, we don't deserve it, we don't deserve eternal life, but God freely gives it to us.

Folks, Peter doesn't say grow in devotion to God, or grow in your zeal towards God, or grow in holiness, as important as those are. But to grow in grace because we are saved by the grace of God, we stand by the grace of God and we will be taken to glory one day by the grace of God.

Thus, grace is not only the starting point, but also the only point!

You see, grace is not merely the way God draws us to Him in the beginning. It is also the way we grow and stay in our steadfastness. We can never grow apart from the grace and knowledge of our Lord, and we never grow out of God's grace.

Spurgeon put it like this, “But you will remark that our text does not say anything about grace growing; it does not say that grace grows. It tells us to ‘grow in grace.’ There is a vast difference between grace growing and our growing in grace. God’s grace never increases; it is always infinite, so it cannot be more; it is always everlasting; it is always bottomless; it is always shoreless. It cannot be more; and, in the nature of God, it could not be less. The text tells us to ‘grow in grace.’ We are in the sea of God’s grace; we cannot be in a deeper sea, but let us grow now we are in it.”

Peter also tells us we need to grow in our knowledge of Jesus, to have that intimate relationship with Him because the more we do, the more of Him will be seen in our lives.

The more we learn of Him the more we learn of ourselves and the more we see the bountiful, the never-ending grace of God.

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:1-4, **“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”**

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

Growing in grace often means experiencing trials and even suffering. We never really experience the grace of God until we are at the end of our own resources. The lessons learned in the *“school of grace”* are always costly lessons, but they are worth it. To grow in grace means to become more Like the Lord Jesus Christ, from whom we receive all the grace that we need (John 1:16).

We must also grow in knowledge. How easy it is to grow in knowledge but not in grace! All of us know far more of the Bible than we really live. Knowledge without grace is a terrible weapon, and grace without knowledge can be very shallow. But when we combine grace and knowledge, we have a marvelous tool for building our lives and for building the church.

But note that we are challenged to grow, not just in knowledge of the Bible, as good as that is, but “in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” It is one thing to “know the Bible,” and quite another thing to know the Son of God, the central theme of the Bible. The better we know Christ through the Word, the more we grow in grace; the more we grow in grace, the better we understand the Word of God.

So, the separated Christian must constantly be guarding himself, lest he be led away into error; he also must be constantly growing in grace and knowledge. This requires diligence! It demands discipline and priorities. Nobody automatically drifts into spiritual growth and stability, but anybody can drift out of dedication and growth. “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it” (Heb 2:1, NASB). Just as the boat needs the anchor, so the Christian needs the Word of God.

- Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT*, p. 957

As I close this evening and we finish this letter, may you be watching for the Lord’s return and live your life as if He is coming back at any moment, because He is!

And in knowing all that God has done for us, as Peter said, “**To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**”

And folks, *MARANATHA – COME LORD JESUS!*