

## IV. THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE, 3:1-18

1. Christ's Second Coming and the End of the World,  
3:1-13

## CHAPTER III

**3:1-2 This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles:**

**Expanded Translation**

This, loved ones, is the second epistle (letter) that I now write to you. In both of these, I thoroughly arouse (literally, wake up) your honest, candid, and sincere minds by putting you in remembrance (reminding you of your duties and privileges in the Gospel); in order to call back to your mind the words which have previously been spoken by the holy (reverent, upright) prophets, and the commandment (charge) of the Lord and Saviour by (from) your apostles.

One immediately notices the striking similarity of 1:12, 13 to this passage.

**This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you**

Unless we assume the writer to be an utter imposter and deceiver, we must accept the fact that the Apostle Peter is the author of *both* New Testament books which bear his name. Throughout the book he speaks of himself as an *apostle of Christ*: 1:1, 14, 16-18, etc. The claim of the writer and the historical evidence are in favor of Peter as the inspired author. It remains for the "higher critics" to *disprove* this claim and evidence. See the *Introduction*.

**and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance**

Showing he had a common objective in writing both letters. Notice what Peter could stir up—a *sincere* mind. This word (*eilikrines*, from the root words *heile*, sunshine, and *krino*, to judge) means properly, that which being viewed in the sunshine is found clear and pure. It is used here (as in Phil. 1:10) metaphorically, and means pure, unsullied, undefiled, sincere, especially in the sense of being *candid*. When one's mind is not filled with deceit, sinister motives, hate, or evil thoughts, *it can be aroused to love and good works!* May each of us strive to keep

our minds pure, and may they be found as such even when viewed in the sunlight of God's Word!

**that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles**

This statement provides somewhat of a summary of Peter's writings—the words of the prophets and apostles. Chap. 1:16-21 especially showed that the teachings of the prophets and apostles coincided with and corroborated each other concerning the person of Christ.

In the parallel statement of Jude 17, 18 is added: "that they [the apostles] said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers . . ." Similarly is verse 4 connected to the words of *both* the prophets and the apostles in *this* passage. Their words must be remembered and heeded unless we want to imbibe false doctrines!

*The words which were spoken before by the holy prophets* here has particular reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the character and work of the Gospel Age. In view of the fact that the New Testament was not yet completed, an appeal to these prophetic utterances was very appropriate. Passages such as those found in Dan. 2, Isa. 2, 11, 53, Micah 4, Jer. 31, Joel 2—all of which speak of the coming Messiah or the days following his advent—should often be brought to our memory. Especially is this necessary when *false doctrine* is about to creep into the church—a very evident danger here.

The "*commandment (entole)* of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" refers to the *whole scope* of teachings we accepted when we came to Christ. Christians have had "the holy commandments delivered unto them" (v. 21, where see notes) from which they must not turn back.

**3:3-4 knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.**

### ***Expanded Translation***

Realizing this first (and keeping it uppermost in your minds), that at the time of the last days mockers (deriders, scoffers) shall come with (or, in) mockery (scoffing, derision), walking according to (dominated by) their own personal cravings and strong desires (not what God desires), while they are saying, Where is

the (fulfillment of the) promise of his (Christ's second) coming? For from the time that the fathers fell asleep (i.e., died), all things are remaining as they are (fixed and permanent in their pattern, course, or place) as they were at (and from) the beginning of creation.

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**knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery**

Jesus prophesied of mockery concerning Himself (Matt. 20; 19, fulfilled in 27:29-31, 41). If we live the Christ-like life, we may expect similar treatment. See Jn. 15:18-20.

"The last days" is a term used sometimes in the New Testament with reference to the last days of Judah (and Jerusalem) as a nation (Acts 2:17, Jas. 5:3). This *could* be true here, but it seems likely that the term is more general in its meaning and indicates *the last days of the world*, the final dispensation of history. *The Christian Age*, then, is evidently meant here, as in II Tim. 3:1, Heb. 1:2, I Pet. 1:5, 20. The word *eschatos* ("last") used here, occurs in all these verses.

**walking after their own lusts**

Both the words "their" and "own" are emphatic in the Greek. These men are quick to scoff, mimic, and ridicule the Christian, but their own personal lives are rotten to the core! Why? They live for *themselves*, utterly indifferent to the laws of God.

**and saying, where is the promise of his coming**

That is, Christ's return to earth. It is significant that the *very same doctrine* is frequently the subject of mockery today among worldlings. "You're as slow as the second coming of Christ," or "You'll never get that done until Christ returns" and similar statements are to be heard from their foul mouths. Others, while not deriding the doctrine verbally, do so *inwardly*, for they make no preparation to meet the Saviour. This shows their *unbelief*, for the Master said, "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13).

**for, from the days that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation**

Their statement simply was not true, for they willfully forgot the facts of history (v. 5). Many today placate their consciences by the same means—purposely forgetting (and many times *disbelieving*) what took place in the days of Noah.

It seems best to take the term "fathers" here as meaning *their* fathers, or the *previous generation*. Between that time and the creation, they asserted, summer and winter, springtime and harvest, had come and gone in regular sequence. "Why should we worry *now*? Will it not be the same in the future?"

The second coming of Christ was an oft-discussed subject in the early church, and many of the Thessalonians, particularly, were of the belief that the Lord's coming was "just at hand" (II Thes. 2:2). It may be that some of these mockers were acquainted with those who continued to believe this erroneous doctrine. If so, it doubtless added fuel to the fire of their already insulting remarks. Today, "date setting" has cheapened the *true* doctrine of the return of Christ in the minds of the world.\* But we may still expect our belief in this glorious event to be ridiculed and mocked, even when the worldlings about us are not acquainted with the false teachings of men on the subject.

**3:5-6 For this day they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:**

### **Expanded Translation**

For they, because of their desire to do so, purposely and wilfully ignore and let go unnoticed the fact that by (through) the word of God the heavens of long ago were brought into being, and an earth was put together—part of it sticking up out of water and part of it in the midst of water—through which means (words and actions of God) the world which existed at that time perished and was brought to ruin, being (as it was) flooded over with water.

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#### **For this they wilfully forget**

Literally, "For this goes wilfully unnoticed to them . . ."; that is, the facts of history as recorded by Moses (Gen. 6-8). The

\*William Miller, the actual founder of the Seventh-Day Adventists, said Christ would come in 1843. The prophecy failed, so he fixed a day in October of 1844. That failed also. Other Adventists have set 1847, 1850, 1852, 1854, 1855, 1863, 1866, 1867, 1877, etc., etc., etc. Because of such foolish predicting, the *true doctrine* of Christ's return has suffered ridicule, and is "evil spoken of."

word “wilfully” (*thelo*) includes the thought of desire, along with volition or exercising the will.\* What had previously happened to the world had escaped the attention of their minds, *not* because they had never been *told* or were *uninformed* upon the subject, but because the thought of it was painful to them! It is a well-known axiom that “history repeats.” Of this truth they were aware. The thought of God again bringing woe and destruction upon the earth grated upon their minds. They found a simple “solution”—ignore it and refuse to let the mind dwell upon it! How Satan has succeeded in keeping many people from responding *as they should* to the truth of God’s word, BY TELLING THEM TO “FORGET IT.” God asks a man to *reason* concerning divine things (Isa. 1:18). If he stubbornly refuses to *consider the facts*, salvation is impossible. Sinners wilfully forget many things *to their own damnation*: the brevity and uncertainty of life, the knowledge that all men must die and give an account for their deeds, etc. These very truths, if kept in mind and thought upon, would cause them to look upon life more *seriously*, and prepare for the life to come as they should. The thoughts they avoid and neglect *are the very thoughts that would be of everlasting benefit to them!*

**that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God**

The word “compacted” (*sunistemi*) is from *sun*, together, with, and *histemi*, to make it stand, set, place. The world was “put together,” i.e., “put together by way of composition or combination” (Thayer). But a key question concerning this passage has been, Is Peter telling of the *materials used* when the earth (land) was made, or simply the *manner* of its creation? In the original, either idea is possible, *kai ge ex hudatos kai di’ hudatos* may be rendered “and the land out of water and by means of water,” or “and the land (stood) out of water and in the midst (or between) water.” In view of the fact that we have no record of God using water in the composition of land (that is, that God composed the earth *from* water), the last idea is preferred. It also accords with the Genesis record: “And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land

\*See Thayer’s extensive note under *thelo*. Also see comments under v. 9, “wishing” (*boulomai*).

appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:9-10). The earth was compacted "out of" water only in the sense that it *rose up above the water*.

**by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished**

The pronoun "which" here is in the plural (*hon*, from *hos*) and may not only refer to the flood itself, but to the edict of God to cleanse the world by such a means. Or perhaps the Apostle is referring to "*waters*" here, for in the historical account both the waters from *above and below* combined to bring about the deluge (Gen. 7:11).

PERISHED—This verb (*apollumi*) is quite common to Peter: I Pet. 1:7, II Pet. 3:9; as in the noun form (*apoleia*, "destruction"): II Pet. 2:1 (twice); 2:3, 3:7, 16.

The thought of annihilation is not inherent within this word. The idea is not extinction, but *ruin*. It is the loss "not of being but of well-being" (Vine). Gold that "perishes" (I Pet. 1:7) is gold that is so utterly worn or ruined that it can no longer be of usefulness to society. When the sheep was "lost" (*apollumi*) in the parable of Jesus (Lk. 15:3-6) he surely did not fade into nothingness. Neither did the "lost" (*apollumi*) son (see Lk. 15:24, 32). Jesus said if a man would put new wine in old skins they would "perish" (*apollumi*). Disappear? Dissolve into non-existence? Go up in a puff of blue smoke leaving no trace behind? No. They were made totally useless for their intended purpose—"ruined." The same was true of the ancient world. The flood did not cause either the globe itself or the sinful people who dwelt thereon to be *annihilated*. The people of that age *perished*—died prematurely and were lost eternally—unable to enter their *intended* home with God.\*

**3:7 but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.**

\*The force of Peter's argument is not particularly lost if we only take the word "perished" in the sense of "died," as in Matt. 8:25. But the word's normal sense in the middle voice (here) is to perish *eternally*, lose one's salvation, and suffer the agonies of hell, as in 3:9.

**Expanded Translation**

but when God decides to destroy the earth a second time, the case will be different. The heavens that exist now and the earth (land), by means of the same word (which word caused the antediluvians to perish by water), have been kept in store (preserved) for fire, being kept, guarded and reserved unto the day of judgment and (the day of the) destruction (perishing) of ungodly and irreverent men.

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**but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire**

The "earth" (*ge*) in this passage can only refer to this globe. The word literally means land or ground—*terra firma* (comp. v. 5) and is frequently used to refer to our *planet as a whole*, as opposed to *the heavens* (Matt. 5:18, 35, 6:10, etc.). But how limited is the term "heavens" here (or in verses 10, 12, 13)?

The Jews divided the heaven into three parts, viz., (1) The air or atmosphere, where clouds gather and birds fly; (2) The firmament, in which the sun, moon, and stars are fixed; and (3) the upper heaven, the abode of God and his angels, the presently invisible realm of holiness and happiness, the home of the children of God.

It is this classification which is needed to explain Paul's "third heaven" of II Cor. 12:2. But which of these three is meant by *Peter* in *this* chapter? Surely not the third, so we must either choose between the first and second, or combine them.

It is a debated question as to whether there is *any* real Biblical evidence that the second coming of Christ and the destruction of the world will involve any planets or heavenly bodies outside of our own. The references in Matt. 24:29, Mk. 13:24, 25; Lk. 21:25-26, so commonly taken to refer to the second coming of Christ, speak of stars falling from heaven and the powers of the heavens being shaken. But many would *limit* these passages to the destruction of Jerusalem, making the stars, sun, etc., *figurative*, representing the rulers of Jerusalem and Judea. The "coming of the Son of man," while referring to Christ, does *not* (according to these interpreters) refer to his *second* coming, but the *presence* and *manifestation* of his *wrath* upon the rebellious Jews.\* Similarly, the sun, moon, and stars of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17)

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\*Compare our notes on the term "day of visitation" (I Pet. 2:12). See also I Pet. 4:7 under the phrase, "The end of all things is at hand."

are now thought by many exegetes to be symbolic of rulers and others of high political rank. If the student would take the time to carefully examine each of the above passages contextually, I believe you will agree that in each case the evidence is weighty *against* attaching a literal significance to the various celestial bodies mentioned.

In verse 10 the marginal reading, "heavenly bodies" for "elements" has caused others to believe that even *Peter* taught that planets and stars will be involved in the destruction of the world. But see notes on that passage. The marginal reading is not preferred.

It is my conclusion, based on the evidence of this chapter and the *apparent* teachings of Scripture elsewhere, that the "heavens" mentioned here have only to do with the atmosphere which surrounds our own globe. The evidence that other planets (or even the moon) will be involved in that great catastrophe seems, at best, to be shaky and uncertain.

#### **by the same word have been stored up for fire**

Just as God's Word brought the world into *existence* (v. 5), and caused it to perish by the flood (v. 6, compare Gen. 6:7), so he has, by that same infallible and unchangeable word, proclaimed that the world would be destroyed by fire. In that day long ago, God said "yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). But *we do not know* what day God has set aside for the great conflagration spoken of in this passage. *We do know its coming is certain!*

#### **being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men**

*All* will appear at the Judgment Day (II Cor. 5:10). For the righteous it will be a day of *acquittal*. But for the unrighteous it will be the day their doom is pronounced. The word "destruction" (*apoleia*) is discussed in the previous verse.

**3:8-9 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

#### **Expanded Translation**

But, loved ones, instead of being like those around you (who willfully forget, v. 5), *you* must not ignore, let go unnoticed, or for-



get this one thing: that one day is as a thousand years as far as the Lord is concerned, and a thousand years is as one day (therefore, the elapse of time does not hinder his purposes). The Lord is not slow or delaying concerning (the fulfillment of) his promise (to destroy the world by fire) in the manner that some men think of slowness or delay, but rather is long-suffering and patient, (withholding His wrath) toward you, not purposing, determining, or wishing that any person perish and be lost, but rather that all should come to repentance (a radical change of mind for the better, which influences the whole life).

### **But forget not this one thing beloved**

The word "forget" (*lanthano*) occurs in v. 5 (where see definition). The idea here is, "These false teachers wilfully let the true facts of religion, especially concerning the world's destruction, go unnoticed. You Christians must *not* let this of which I am now about to speak escape your memories . . ."

### **that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**

That is, time means *nothing* to God, particularly here as it concerns the fulfillment of his promises and purposes (see verse 4). As far as God is concerned, he might just as well have decreed the end of the world *a couple of days ago!* The lapse of time between His decree and its fulfillment is no weighty argument against the *certainty* and *truthfulness* of the prophecy.

This statement again refutes the mockers' idea that the Lord had not appeared as yet, and "all things continue unchanged from the beginning . . ." (v. 4). In verse 6 the apostle shows that things have not continued unchanged. And here he points out that the passing of centuries means nothing to *God*. Yet such a delay may seem *long to man*.

Thus two basic arguments stand out against those who made light of the coming destruction of the world.

1. True history (verses 5-7).
2. God's view of time (verses 8-9).

### **the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness**

That is, the Lord is not *slow* or behindhand in fulfilling His promise, though some *men* may *think* so who do not understand His timeless nature. The verb "slack" (*braduno*) and the noun

“slackness” (*bradutes*) may be simply defined “slow” and “slowness” respectively, or “tardy” and “tardiness.” As most *men* reckon time, God is certainly “slack.” But that is *man’s* idea of slackness, *not God’s*.

**but is longsuffering to you-ward**

He is patient, forbearing, and slow in avenging wrongs, for so *makrothumia* signifies. The word generally describes “the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong” (Thayer), and stands opposed to the quick or impulsive manifestation of wrath or revenge. (God has this trait, and we are to be holy as he is holy—I Pet. 1:16.)

It is because of this characteristic of God that he may appear “slack” concerning his promise. When he decreed that the ancient world would be destroyed, His longsuffering caused him to spare that world for a hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3). How much longer will his patience hold out with the present world? With crime, lust, war, and rebellion everywhere, it is surely difficult to believe that the awful event described in these verses is very far distant.

**not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**

Giving a *reason* for his longsuffering. God has nothing but the good of his creatures at heart! He “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4).\* It is not “a few” or “some” that he desires to be saved, but “all”! “And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take of the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17b).

(See notes on the word “perish” (*apollumi*) under v. 6. Concerning the foreknowledge of God as it pertains to salvation, see notes under I Pet. 1:2.)

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\*In I Tim. 2:4 the verb “would have” is *thelo*, while the verb “wishing” (*boulomai*) is used here. The distinction between these words is not always clear-cut, but Abbot-Smith expresses the consensus when he says *boulomai* implies more strongly than *thelo* the deliberate exercise of volition. Thus it is neither God’s purpose or intention *nor* his wish or desire that any person be lost. When a man opposes the desire and purpose of God to save him, God, being both merciful and righteous, must exercise justice. But let no man blame God for being in a state of condemnation! See further notes on *thelo* (“willfully”), v. 5.

**3:10** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

### Expanded Translation

However long it may seem to be delayed, be assured, the day of the Lord *will* come. It will come as a thief (that is, suddenly and unexpectedly). At that time the heavens shall pass away, (pass by, disappear, vanish) with a loud, rushing, crashing noise, and the elements or basic components of the earth (atoms?)\* shall be disengaged, unbound, and broken apart while they are burning intensely, and the earth and the works (accomplishments of man) that are in it shall be burned up (consumed by fire).\*\*

### But the day of the Lord will come as a thief

The expression, "the day of the Lord" is frequent in the Scripture, and generally points to some great calamity (Isa. 2:12, 13:6, Jer. 46:10). The idea of the phrase seems to be: "You've had *your* day (in living according to your own lusts), now I'll have *mine!*" However, the expression here may point to the second coming of Christ, as it certainly does in I Thes. 5:2. But whether "Lord" here refers to Christ or God, the *event* spoken of by the expression is still the same: the second coming of the Master and the destruction of the world. In *this* passage they may be thought of as the same event. That day will come as a *thief*, that comes quickly, stealthily, and without warning. Suddenly and abruptly, it will be upon us. Compare the teaching of Christ, Matt. 24:42-44.\*\*\*

### in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise

See comments, v. 7. The word *hroizedon* ("great noise") was used anciently of various rushing or roaring noises, as the rushing of wings, the sound of mighty winds, the roaring of mighty waters, the roaring of flames, or the sound of thunder. It is difficult to say with certainty just *what kind* of noise is meant in this

\*or, possibly, "heavenly bodies." But see notes.

\*\*or, according to other MSS, including the Vatican and Sinaitic, "discovered" or "found out" (*heurisko*). Cp. Eccl. 12:14.

\*\*\*Many doubt that the Matthew passage refers to Christ's *second* coming. But the same lesson of *preparedness* is taught.

passage, other than it will be *loud* and *roaring*.

With such a sound the earth will "pass away" (*parerchomai*, to go past, pass by, etc.). This expression, to my mind, precludes the idea that the "new heavens" will be the old heavens re-made or "fixed up." The atmosphere surrounding the world, we are told by scientists, has potentially combustible materials. So Peter says, "the heavens *being on fire* shall be dissolved" (v. 12). Two age-old fears of man will be present in the skies on that day: (1) A loud noise or blast. (2) A great fire.

It would not be my place to here make a prophecy that God will somehow employ atomic energy or nuclear weapons to destroy the world. But the reader can certainly see in these words of Peter that such is *possible*.

#### **and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat**

Considerable controversy is waged among the critics here as to the proper meaning of the word "elements" (*stoicheion*). Two meanings are given as possibilities in this passage: (1) heavenly bodies—planets, stars, etc., and (2) the basic components or constituent parts of the earth. The first is a possibility, for the word is so used by ancient writers: Diogenes Laertius, Justin, Tryphidorus, and Theophilus. But in other ancient writings (such as Plato's works and the Septuagint Version), it carries the idea of the material elements or components of the universe—the primary material of which anything is made. The word is several times in the New Testament used of those things which are primary or fundamental (that is, the "A-B-C's" of something). In this sense it applies to knowledge: Heb. 5:12 ("rudiments") or to the "basics" of any way of thinking or living (Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20—"rudiments"). As far as I can see, this word, as it stands in *this context*, is approximately equivalent to our word "atom"—the smallest unitary constituent of a chemical element.

I would take, then, the present passage to teach that the very elements which make up all matter shall disintegrate within the mighty furnace of fire that shall envelop the earth in that day.

The verb "shall be dissolved," is from *luo*, literally, to loosen, unbind, unfasten, disengage. In v. 5 we saw that God, by his mighty power, "compacted" or "put together" the earth. *Now* we find that he is also going to pull it apart—at its very seams! Precisely *what* will happen to this globe when its elements break apart is a moot question—nor is it necessary for us to know.

Peter's main point here is to show the *terribleness* of that great cataclysmic day. Let us be warned! Let us be found faithful to our God! Let us be *ready!* For,

**the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up**

The word *katakaio* means to consume with fire, burn completely (Matt. 13:30, Acts 19:19), but does not *necessarily* carry with it the thought of obliteration or annihilation. If something is "burned up," its chemical relation is changed and much of it goes up in smoke. Whether this globe will look like a ball of charcoal, or whether it will *exist at all*, after this event, is not answered with certainty in this chapter. (See notes under v. 13.)

Paul also speaks of fire in relationship to Christ's second coming: ". . . at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire" (II Thes. 1:7).

**3:11-12 Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?**

#### ***Expanded Translation***

Realizing that these things [the earth, v. 10; and the skies, v. 12] are all to be broken apart, unfastened, and dissolved in the manner of which I speak, what kind of persons it is necessary and proper for you to be in all things which are manifestations of holy (pure, sanctified, dedicated) living and godliness (devotion, reverence toward God)? looking for (anticipating) and earnestly desiring (eagerly expecting) the coming (appearance, presence) of the day of God. On account of this manifestation of his presence, the heavens, being set on fire and burning shall be caused to disintegrate (break apart, dissolve) and the elements (basic) or primary components of matter, as in v. 10) burning intensely and with great heat, shall be liquified and melted.

#### **Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved**

See v. 10. Everything burnable and capable of being dissolved *shall be dissolved* on that day! How this ought to sober every thoughtful mind! The fine estates, the beautiful homes, the lovely gardens, the expensive clothes, the chrome-laden automobiles—ALL shall be dissolved at the command of God. How foolish it is, then, for us to make *material* things the object of primary interest and concern in life.

In view of the certainty of this world's doom, the apostle argues **what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness (?)**

The word "all" is in the plural number in the Greek, as is shown in the Expanded Translation. See "godliness" (*eusebeia*) defined under 1:6.\*

**looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God**

That is, the day I am now describing to you. "The day of God" and "the day of the Lord" (v. 10) are synonymous in these verses.

The worldly man, after reading this account, has every right to fear and tremble! But the man *who is living as he should*, looks into the future with the hope that that day is not far distant. He is "looking for" it (*prosdokao*): to expect, wait for, anticipate. And he is "earnestly desiring" it (*spseudo*): literally, to hasten; hence to be eager for, etc. (But some, preferring to hold to the more primary meaning, believe something like "urge on" or "accelerate" to be the proper definition here.)

**by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?**

Compare v. 10 and note the difference in wording. Whereas in that passage we are told the heavens shall "pass away with a great noise," here we are also told they shall *be on fire* and *dissolved* (the latter word, *luo*, is discussed under v. 10). And whereas in that passage we are told the elements shall be dissolved, here we are told they shall *melt* (*teko*, to melt, melt down, liquefy; hence, "to perish or be destroyed by melting"—Thayer).

The only possible picture one can draw from these words is that of a mighty, flaming, searing holocaust, enveloping the earth itself and all the atmosphere about it. A day of anticipation and expectation? Yes, indeed, *for those who are ready to live with Christ!* When the last trump shall sound, it shall strike terror into the heart of many. But to the righteous that day shall be a day of joy, and we may "comfort one another with these words"! (I Thes. 4:18).

**3:13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**

\*The impersonal verb *dei* ("ought") generally implies *necessity*, and is frequently rendered "must." See, for example, Lk. 2:49, Jn. 3:7, Acts 4:12, 5:29, 9:6, 16:30; Heb. 11:6.

**Expanded Translation**

But (though this world shall surely be destroyed as I have described), in accordance with his promise to grant us such, we look with anticipation and expectation for new, fresh, unused heavens and a new, fresh, unused earth.

**But, according to his promise,**

We are again reminded of our promises, as in 1:4. See also v. 9. The promise of a heavenly home for the righteous is repeated several times in Scripture: Jn. 14:1-3, Lk. 20:34-36 ("that world"), etc. But see especially Isa. 65:17, 22; Rev. 21:1, where the new heavens and new earth are promised. Note our discussion of "the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (1:11). In that new world, righteousness and justice shall "dwell," that is, shall prevail and be practiced everywhere. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27).

**we look for new heavens and a new earth,**

But precisely what is meant by *new* heavens and a *new* earth? The word *kainos*, according to the lexicons, is used with respect to *form* or *quality*, and means fresh, unused, novel. W. E. Vine tells us that it does not necessarily mean new in *time*, but new as to *form* or *quality*, of a different nature from what is contrasted as old. The "*new*" (*kainos*) tomb in which Joseph of Arimathea laid the body of the Lord (Matt. 27:60, Jn. 19:41), was not a tomb recently hewn from the rock, but one that had never yet been used or occupied, in which no dead person had lain (which would have made it ceremonially unclean). It might have been hewn out a hundred years before, but in view of the fact that it had not been *used*, it is termed *kainon* (from *kainos*). So heaven may be ready and waiting for us *now*, and perhaps will wait for another thousand years, but it will still be *kainos* as long as it is unused and unoccupied.

Had Peter wanted to say that the new heavens and earth were only the old remade or cleansed, he would *probably* have chosen another Greek word—*neos*, which also means "new." Thayer says "*neos* denotes the new primarily in reference to *time*, the young, recent; *kainos* denotes the new primarily in reference to quality, the fresh, unworn." This distinction is confirmed by Vine, for in

speaking of *neos* he says it "may be a reproduction of the old in quality and character . . ." but no such statement is made of *kainos*, used here.\*

Because of the above distinction, along with what is said elsewhere in Scripture, it is difficult to believe that our eternal home will be on *this* globe, for it is very "used," yea, "worn out"! Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn. 14:2). Did Christ go to some place on earth?\*

John saw "a new heaven and new earth [*kainos* in both instances]: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more" (Rev. 21:1). No, the heavens and earth that shall *then be* are not the heavens and earth *we have at present*. It shall not be a renovated earth, but "brand new"!

**3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.**

### **Expanded Translation**

Wherefore (in conclusion) loved ones, in view of the fact that you are looking for and anticipating these things, you must be diligent, exert yourself, and put forth earnest effort to be found in peace, without spot (moral or spiritual blotch) and blameless (without censure) before him (or *in* him).

#### **Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things**

The events just spoken of, and especially the new heavens and new earth (v. 13).

#### **give diligence**

*spoudazo*. See 1:5, notes.

#### **that ye may be found in peace**

With whom? The reference could be to peaceful relations

\*The careful Greek student will want to read Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 219-225, where *neos* and *kainos* are distinguished.

\*\*The "Jehovah's Witnesses" have made *hamburger* out of this verse! They affirm that the world to be destroyed is only Satan's system of human society. The earthly globe, they say, will remain *forever* and will never be burned up or desolated. (*Make Sure of All Things*, 1053 ed., p. 108). Others have made all kinds of speculations concerning this changed earth and how it shall be used after "cleansing." See *Bornes' Notes* on this verse. Also, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 2357-2358.



among brethren and within the church (Eph. 4:2). But in view of the *context*, peace *with God* seems primarily to be meant. "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4:4b). See Rom. 5:1-2. Peter speaks of God's peace in its various aspects; I Pet. 1:2, 3:10-11, 5:14; II Pet. 1:2.

**without spot and blameless in his sight**

The false teachers were "spots and blemishes" (2:13). Christians are to be "spotless," (*aspilos*). They must be free from the vices which soil and stain their garments—garments made white in the blood of the Lamb.

To be "blameless" (*amometos*) is to live a life that cannot truthfully be censured—that is irreprehensible (Phil. 2:15).

**3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given him, wrote unto you;**

**Expanded Translation**

And, instead of considering his delaying to come as a proof that he will never come, you must account (deem, consider) that the patience, forbearance, and longsuffering of our Lord provides a means and opportunity for the salvation of sinners (giving them time to repent); even as (just as) our beloved and cherished brother Paul, in accordance with the wisdom (skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth\*) which was imparted to him by God, wrote unto you;

**And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation**

See v. 9, and notes there. We must look upon the longsuffering of God for what it *is*—a staying of his wrath to give men more time to repent and turn to Him—not for what it may *appear* to the world to be. The ungodly make a mockery of God's promise because they have not seen its fulfillment (vs. 3-4), and because it seems *to them* he is "slack" (slow, behind) in bringing about the destruction of the world. The *truth* is that God is *longsuffering*, and *this* is why the earth continues as it has. Christians must consider the longsuffering of God *in this light*, knowing that every day God is only allowing the world to survive so that a few more souls may come to know Christ as their Saviour.

\*Thayer, citing this verse under *sophia*.

The word "salvation" (*soteria*) is sometimes used contextually to refer to the *means* or *opportunity* for salvation: Acts 13:26, Rom. 11:11, Heb. 2:3. It may be so considered here. *Because of* God's longsuffering, many will see heaven who would *not* otherwise. His longsuffering provides a means of attaining, an opportunity to accept, and results in, the SALVATION of sinners.

**even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you**

A remarkable example of Christian love is revealed here. Peter was sharply rebuked by this apostle in Antioch some years before (Gal. 2:11ff.). But he is now "our" (not just "your") "beloved brother." True Christians grow to love those who, *out of love for them*, have rebuked them for their evil ways.

"Wisdom" (*sophia*) properly signifies broad and full intelligence, knowledge, ability, or skill. Its *precise* meaning is determined by the context. "The wisdom given him" here refers to God-given wisdom, that is, the *Divine* wisdom which he had as an inspired apostle. Paul not only had skill and discretion in imparting Christian truth, but the very *source* of his wisdom was Christ (Gal. 1:15-17), "in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:3). Paul appealed to his own statements as the words of God. "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things that I write unto you, that they are the *commandments of the Lord*" (I Cor. 14:37).

With such wisdom Paul wrote all his epistles, but he is here said to have written to *these people* concerning "these things" (v. 16), that is, the events pertaining to the end of the world. In 3:1 it is seen that the same persons are addressed in this epistle as in the first—i.e., "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (I Pet. 1:1. See notes there for the meaning of "sojourners" and "Dispersion").

One immediately recognizes these countries as areas where Paul's letters circulated. He wrote to the "churches" of Galatia (Gal. 1:2), to the Ephesians in the province of Asia, to the Colossians (including the Laodiceans, Col. 4:16) in the same country (and not far from Lycia and Pamphylia). His letters to Timothy were written while that young man was in Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3). These epistles, circulating in the area (and also perverted, v. 16), spoke of these events, as did "all his epistles."

But the *particular* similarity of Paul's writings cited in *this* verse is the *longsuffering of God* as it pertains to the salvation of man. This general theme is treated by Paul in various places in the epistles he sent to the Christians of Asia Minor.

**3:16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**

### **Expanded Translation**

as also is true in all his epistles (letters), speaking in them concerning these very things (of which I have just spoken). In these epistles certain things (statements) are hard to understand, which the unlearned, (uninstructed, ignorant) and unstedfast (unsettled, unstable) wrench, distort, and pervert, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction, ruin, and damnation.

**as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things**

The letters of Paul, particularly those addressed to the Thessalonians, say much concerning the very subjects treated in this epistle (and especially of matters pertaining to the end of the world, which seems primarily to be meant by "these things").

It is well to note here that many of Paul's writings were now in circulation—and so well-known that Peter assumes his readers are acquainted with them. As was mentioned in the *Introduction*, this fact, of necessity, points to a relatively late date for this epistle. Notice, also, that *Peter* believed Paul's writings to be inspired, for he placed them alongside "the other scriptures." Therefore to deny that Paul's writings deserve to be classified as "scripture," is also to impeach the truthfulness and inspiration of Peter.

**wherein are some things hard to be understood**

That is, some of the subjects and statements treated in Paul's epistles. Any careful student of his writings will not find it hard to admit this truth! But notice that Peter does *not* say, "for this reason cast them aside and do not study them"! The book of Revelation certainly is not easily understood, but the Holy Spirit says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things which are written therein . . ." (Rev. 1:3).

**which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction**

The word rendered "wrest" (*streblōo*) is akin to *streble*, a windlass, wrench, instrument of torture, rack. Thus the word properly means "to distort (or stretch) the limbs on a rack." Used here metaphorically, the reference is to "one who wrests or tortures language" (Thayer), i.e., the language and words of scripture.

And who does this? The ignorant and unstedfast—often members of the same class. If they would admit their ignorance, seek out the truth, and *abide* by it, all would be well for them. But persisting in such ways, their only end is destruction. See notes, 2:1. (On "destruction," *apoleia*, see under v. 6, "perished.")

**3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness.**

### **Expanded Translation**

You therefore, loved ones, knowing ahead of time that these men treat the scripture in this manner, be on the watch! Keep guard! Lest, having been carried away (led astray) by the error (wrong opinion, misleading doctrines) of the wicked, lawless and unrestrained, you fall from (and thus *lose*) your own stedfastness and firmness.

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### **Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand**

"To be forewarned is to be forearmed," and so should it be with Christians today. False teachers are still "torturing" the truth, and such torturing ought to be painful to the heart of all who have a love for genuine, saving knowledge. But more than that, Peter exhorts us to

**beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness**

The word rendered "beware" (*phulasso*) means to be on watch, keep guard, protect. But it appears here in the middle voice, and means specifically to be on one's guard (against), keep oneself from. And being in the aorist tense and imperative mode, we have here a very pointed *command* to be heeded at once! How it is needed in this day when false teachings (and the conveyors of such) are everywhere! They may fairly *carry us away* (*sunapago*). See also Gal. 2:13.

Their teachings are clearly labelled by the apostle, who terms them "error" (*plane*), literally, a wandering, straying about. The word here signifies teachings that *cause one* to wander or stray from the right way, i.e., those doctrines which mislead one. Christian, *keep your guard up!* Be on the watch! (Compare I Pet. 5:8.)

We again find here (as in 2:1-3, 19) that the *false teacher himself* is living in sin. The word "wicked" (*athesmos*) is made up of the alpha negative plus *thesmos*, law custom. It therefore describes one who breaks through the restraints of law and conscience and gratifies his lusts—a lawless, unrestrained, licentious individual. Its only other New Testament occurrence is in 2:7, where the above definition is also borne out by the context.

The next step is only natural if we begin to cater to these men.  
**lest ye fall from your own stedfastness**

In verse 16 the "unstedfast" (*asteriktos*) were those headed for destruction. Here *Christians* are warned to be on guard lest *they* fall from *their* stedfastness and be found in the same plight as the false teacher. We are reminded of the exhortation of our Lord, "Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14).

To be in a state of stedfastness (*sterigmos*) is to be in a settled or firm state of mind; therefore fixed and stable in fulfilling spiritual responsibilities. From this condition we may *fall* (*ekpipto*, fall out of, fall from, fall off). This very same word appears in I Peter 1:24, "the flower falleth . . ." It takes time to become a truly stedfast Christian, and the false teachers were successful in enticing "unstedfast souls" (2:14) and "those who are just escaping from them that live in error" (2:18). But those *here* described are now stedfast. Are they therefore out of danger? No! "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

**3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.**

### **Expanded Translation**

But rather than falling from your own stedfastness, you must keep on growing (increasing, enlarging) in that way of living which gains the grace (favor, acceptance) and knowledge (understanding) of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory (praise, honor) both now and forever (literally, unto the day of eternity).

**But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**

The word "grow" (*auxano*) is in the present imperative—"continue growing!" Peter wished God's grace upon them at the beginning (1:2), but he wants it to be increased. He also wants them to grow in *knowledge* (*gnosis*), one of those virtues mentioned in the cluster found in 1:5-7, which was to be "yours and abound" (1:8). Thus Peter is not saying his readers had no grace or knowledge, but that these should and must cause them to increase!

**to him be the glory both now and forever**

Literally, "unto (or for) the day of eternity," i.e., "for all time, forever" (Thayer). That day shall be a "day" indeed—a day that shall never end!

**QUESTIONS OVER CHAPTER THREE**

1. What direct statement in this chapter causes us to believe Peter was the author of both books bearing his name?
2. What was his common objective for both books?
3. Whose *words* were the Christians to remember?
4. Whose *commandment*?
5. In what days were the mockers to come?
6. The mockers were saying, "Where is the promise of \_\_\_\_\_ (?)"
7. How had the world continued since creation, according to these fellows?
8. Was their history accurate?
9. Were they sincerely trying to remember the facts?
10. What part of history was forgotten?
11. Explain: "an earth compacted out of water and amidst water" (v. 5).
12. Give a brief but accurate definition of the word "perish" (*apollumi*), v. 6.
13. With what other word (which occurs several times in this chapter) is it closely related?
14. What are the three "heavens" of the Bible?
15. Which of the three is meant when the word is used in *this chapter*?

## LETTERS FROM PETER

16. In v. 7 we are told the earth has been "stored up for fire," and v. 10 also speaks of the effects of fire on the earth. In what *other* New Testament passage is fire connected with the second coming of Christ?
17. Finish v. 8: "But forget not this one thing, beloved, one day . . ."
18. How does this statement fit into the *context*?
19. Explain: "The Lord is not *slack* concerning his promise . . ." (v. 9).
20. Does God hope some people never repent?
21. What two basic arguments of the mockers (both false) has Peter now refuted?
22. In *what way* will "the day of the Lord" come as a *thief*?
23. At that time the heavens shall \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_ (?)
24. What are the "elements" which shall be dissolved with fervent heat? (Give two possible answers.)
25. "Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved," what should the effect be upon our daily lives?
26. How should Christians regard "the coming of the day of God"?
27. What is probably true of your life if you cannot think upon Christ's coming with eagerness and joy?
28. Will just the *earth* be dissolved at that time?
29. How could the *sky* be on fire?
30. The elements shall both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with fervent heat (vs. 10, 12).
31. We look for new heavens and a new earth "according to his promise." What promise? Where is it found?
32. In what sense will the future heavens and earth be "new"?
33. Do you believe heaven will be on this globe? Why, or why not?
34. What will dwell there? (one word.)
35. Do you believe any of our recent inventions pertaining to the use (or misuse) of atomic energy and nuclear weapons could play a part in the world's destruction?
36. How should we be found in the day of Christ's coming?
37. "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is \_\_\_\_\_" (?) Now explain this statement.
38. Peter terms Paul "our \_\_\_\_\_" (?)

## II PETER

39. By what power or influence did Paul write (using Peter's words).
40. Did Paul ever write to the same people as Peter?
41. Did Peter say his own writings were hard to understand?
42. Should we only study Scriptures that are easily understood? (Prove answer.)
43. How does one "wrest" scripture?
44. What class of persons do this? (According to Peter.)
45. How do you *know* Peter regarded Paul's writings as inspired?
46. Is it possible to fall from a state of steadfastness?
47. What is Peter's final exhortation to the Christians?