

"1 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. 3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up." 2 Peter 3:1-10, NAS95.

I would like to remind you this morning of what we said when we began our study of this letter. It is not very difficult to see the main theme of purpose of this Epistle. Let's read the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse of the letter and the last verse of the letter in 3:18,

1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3:18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

That is it. The entire letter will emphasize over and over again how important it is that we grow in our knowledge of Christ. Now of course there is an explicit reason for this as well which is stated in the letter and that is found in 1:16 and 2:1

"1:16 For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty."  
"2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."

In the beginning of this part of the letter that is our text for this morning we see the same idea being reinforced as a guard against the false prophets and their teaching.

"2 that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles." 2 Peter 3:2 NAS95.

The Word of God is the defense against the false prophets. The Word of God given by God's prophets contained in both the Old Testament and the current letters or teachings of the Apostles are the only two sources of God's truth.

Today we have more truth preserved for us than they did. New Testament truth was a living breathing oral tradition at first and then the letters and the gospels were

written and copied. Nevertheless, the truth of both sources was consistent and taught the same truths. The Old Testament prophet's teaching was confirmed by the apostles teaching. That is the correct way of seeing it. The New Testament Scriptures confirm the Old, not the other way around. The New Testament Scriptures are the completion and fulfillment of the Old. Some of the Old, although accurate, could not be fully understood until we have the New. The Old pointed forward and gave even specific details, but it took the coming of Christ for it to be clearly understood. Christ was the author of the truth they preached and they ministered or delivered it to others.

Peter is stirring up or stimulating them to keep sincere minds, minds concerning God's word which are not contaminated by error, reminding them of what they know already.

It is obvious that Peter is attacking the false prophets who are denying the second coming of Christ and even possibly that the resurrection of believers was already past and it was only spiritual, not physical. Paul addressed this error in 2 Tim 2:16-17 when he named Hymaneaus and Philetus for teaching this false doctrine. If there is no resurrection of believers there is no need for a second coming at least as Jesus and the apostles taught

Peter tells them the second coming will be denied and mocked by cynical people,

**"3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts," 2 Peter 3:3, NAS95.**

It is obvious that the scoffing and mocking is related to the fact that judgement has not come. If men are not being judged for sinning by now, then who has to worry. If sin is really so bad and men are condemned because they are sinners, then show me the judgment.

**"4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."" 2 Peter 3:4, NAS95.**

Notice the grave error here from a biblical point of view. As far as the mockers are concerned, since the beginning of time there has never been any judgment of God for mans sin.

**"5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the**

heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water." 2 Peter 3:5, 6, NAS95.

The mockers beliefs exist today just as then.

Men do not believe in original sin. If they believe in sin it is not in a biblical way. Many cultures have a great flood mythology but the Bible is the only account that connects it to judgment for man's sin.

Men have continued to do what is right in their own eyes and cannot see the warnings given by God. It does not matter if it is Noah preaching for 120 years or 2000 years since the Son of Righteousness declared that there will be final judgment and gnashing and grinding of teeth in hell, men mock and scorn God as if prophetic truth is a myth.

It should strike us as ironic that these same scoffers are prophesied in Scripture. Malachi 4:1, 2: "Behold the day comes burning like an oven when all the arrogant and evildoers will be stubble . . . But for you who fear my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go forth leaping like calves from the stall."

They are merely proving out what Christ said would occur:

"42 "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." Matthew 24:42, NAS95.

The last days have arrived. All things are waiting the appearing of Christ a source of hope for believers and an unknown horror for the scoffers.

Verse 6 as it references the creation is also an indictment against the scoffers.

While there is a constancy in the created order that is undeniable and can only be attributed to God, these things have been observed and recorded for ages throughout their cycles, yet God is denied because Scripture has not been consulted in earnest.

Yet, the Scriptures tell us that even in the constancy, God disrupted it when HE chose to do so. The world created out of water and by water was destroyed by that same water and the false prophets do not recognize that some things were changed as a result of judgment. Now that world will be destroyed by fire.

"7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." 2 Peter 3:7, NAS95.

The false prophets are denying creation by God and the Sovereignty of God in all things. This understanding cannot take in to account the teaching that everything is following a natural course but is subject to change as purposed by God. What they may consider the laws of nature, or in our day evolution, denies the reasons why the course of nature does change, at times very drastically, when it seemingly should not.

By His Word, God spoke the earth into existence and by his Word things change as they will. God can change the course of history by water or by fire and men will not acknowledge it.

Men mock that God delays His judgment because they believe there is none. Peter responds to that with an idea that for God it has not been so long since He brought previous judgment.

God is eternal but that does not mean that he does not experience time or that he is not aware of time. Prophecy, for example, is time related and it is so as God has scheduled it. There is no luck or chance of anything taking place.

Pete Seeger took Eccl 3:1-8 and put it to music made famous by the Byrds. Even though the application was wrong, a plea for world peace in a time of turmoil in the sixties, the truth of Scripture was clear concerning God's Sovereignty as Lord over time.

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)  
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)  
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to build up, a time to break down  
A time to dance, a time to mourn  
A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)  
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time of love, a time of hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
A time you may embrace, a time to refrain from embracing

To everything (turn, turn, turn)  
There is a season (turn, turn, turn)  
And a time for every purpose, under heaven

A time to gain, a time to lose  
A time to rend, a time to sew  
A time to love, a time to hate  
A time for peace, I swear its not too late

One phrase however is missing in Seeger's adaptation,

A time for war and a time for peace." Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, NAS95.

Peter continues in his letter

"8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day." 2 Peter 3:8, NAS95.

Regarding all of the above Peter makes it clear that this point of his defense cannot be overlooked or misunderstood. The scoffers say that Christ has delayed so long in coming that there is no reason to expect Him to come. This is interesting when it probably a little short of thirty years since the ascension of Christ. That is not a long time, but Christians did hope for a soon return of Christ yet they had no expressed timetable as Jesus said, "no man knows the time". Yet they were to work for the night is coming as Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, where they had a little trouble with being over anxious about Christ's return.

Time is an amazing thing to comprehend. It is constantly passing away and how we relate to it is interesting. Some days seem so long and arduous no matter what we do and others seem so short and we ask who knows where the time goes. We get involved in something we really enjoy and puff, the time is passed by and we must move on. There are days we are laboring in a way we just do not care for and the same period of time seems insufferable.

That is all Peter is saying here. As far as when Jesus returns, Jesus could say, "it

seems just like yesterday that I left the Mount of Olives in the presence of Angels to go and sit at the right hand of my Father in heaven.”

There are those who want this simple statement to be read very literally so it can help to support their theology.

For example, if seven days is a thousand years, then God created the earth in days of a thousand years each so we can sound more scientific. Others will use it to try and calculate all kinds of numerical meanings into Scripture that just do not exist. The context of this text is merely a similitude. One is like the other to God because He is immortal. Once we are glorified and will live forever it will be the same for us. No one will ever be watching the clock while we are worshipping God and then accuse the preacher of being long winded, or running out the door to get to the football stadium or to the restaurant or anywhere. All of our time will be Christ entranced and Christ focused. There will be time for nothing else, nor will we want it any other way.

The flow of Peter’s letter comes to a beautiful highlight in the next statement,

**"9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9, NAS95.**

It is not that the Lord was intending to delay His return as promised but there is a reason why the time of His return has not come –His patience.

Christ will not return until He has completed building His church, until Christ has drawn all those who will come to Him because they hear His voice and know Him as Shepherd, He will not return until He longer needs to be patient concerning the salvation of His people.

For those who are Christ’s we should view this delay as an act of God’s mercy.

How many family members, friends or neighbors do you still pray for to come to know Christ by His grace and mercy? If He comes today they may not have that opportunity. They may not anyway but, the longer the delay the more opportunity for hopeful, trusting prayer to that end, as it pleases our Lord.

If it were not for the patience of God, not one of us would be saved. God being patient, even toward His elect is an incredible thing because we still live part of our lives as God-haters and should be destroyed from day one. In this way we can say that God has a desire for all men to be saved, but the fact remains that only the elect can or will be. He exercised holy patience even to those who are ordained to be His, He had to put up with our sin as much as anyone else. We deserved destruction as much as anyone else, yet, in his time, grace was made known to us for even while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

I don't believe there is a tension between God having a desire and yet because of His attributes and decrees those desires are not fulfilled in an absolute sense. All men whom Christ died for will be saved and it takes the patience of God through the ages for that to occur. He just doesn't say at some[point, "I am tired of this and I am not waiting anymore." No, He waits as long as He already decided He would wait and his loving-kindness and patience make it possible for us to survive until we are saved by grace. There is a time for patience and there is a time for final wrath.

This patience is also a way that the mockers and scorners are held accountable. Until the day comes for Christ to appear, they have had all this time to repent and believe.

But when He does come it will be a horrible tie for those who do not know Christ. It will be the end of God's patience and the time for His wrath.

It will come as an unexpected thief in the night. Mankind will be caught in their sin and uncaring attitudes toward God. When they believe everything is just following its natural course and there is really nothing to worry about the great and mighty day of the Lord will be upon them and there will be no way to escape, no opportunity to reason or any way to change the course of one's future.

The final judgment will be by fire, not water. Not just any fire but a heaven sent fire that is so intense even the elements of the earth disintegrate and even the works of the earth will disappear. All the works of the earth – the works of every creature and created thing-plant, animal, mineral, human- all will be destroyed so that even the earth

itself may be redeemed and be a new creation for the eternal home of those who are a new creation in Christ.

Every promise to the godly and to the ungodly will have its fulfillment as a result of this judgment.

These are some of the things that Peter is determined to continue to remind them of. These are the glorious truths that we need to embrace with all of our hope in Christ. These are the truths that will keep us true and faithful to our Christ rather than having our minds polluted with the lies of false prophets. These are the warnings to some and the words of blessing to others throughout the last days that began on Pentecost and which will end with the return of Christ.

The significance of what Peter has written has not become diminished in any way.

We are living in a time that is just as corrupt as Peter's day. We are faced with the same challenges and even sometimes the same false teachings although they may be disguised in a different outer garment. We need to have all of our hope in Christ as much as they did. False prophets will always be the same or a minor variation of those who preceded them, the scoffers will raise their voices as loud as they can and encourage lust in others until Christ returns because they are nothing but blind leaders of the blind.

Christians who are looking for a fulfilled kingdom on earth or a Christian America or any other form of a godly utopia will be disappointed and will only help immature believers to be looking for hope and help in the wrong place.

Peter wrote,

that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.

Remember it all, the warnings that the false prophets will come and the blessings that await those who are Christ's. Remember and help others to remember and to remember and to remember until it is no longer your work to do so, as Peter did.