

Encouragement in the End Times:

The Day is Coming Soon

Exegetical Study of 2 Peter 3:1-14

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Introduction: From Darkness to Dawn

“Pay attention to (God’s Word), as to a lamp shining in a dark place”¹ (2 Peter 1:19)².

Peter faced his share of the darkness. Jesus had told him, “When you were young, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will tie you and carry you where you do not want to go” (Jn 21:18). The darkness of persecution would soon sweep over the Church and Peter knew he would be swept up in it.

The darkness of persecution is the primary concern of the letter we know as 1 Peter. Its aim is to encourage believers as they follow Christ through the suffering and trials of this life to the promised glory of eternal life. The apostle Peter urges perseverance and encourages spiritual shepherds to feed the flock through all the trials they might face. He reminds them that the darkness will not win. Glory awaits all who trust in Christ. They will follow him from cross to crown. “You will receive an unfading crown of glory” (1 Pt 5:4).

But the darkness doesn’t always come with a foul face and obvious threats against the flesh. Darkness comes also as a deception which obscures the light of truth. It comes with false promises and seductive lies. A quick overview of the history of God’s people will reveal how this type of darkness can cause the most destruction. Seductive lies and false promises were the serpent’s preferred tactic in Eden. “Did God really say?” When the false prophet, Balaam, could not harm the sons of Israel directly, he designed a plan to seduce them. He ensnared the people by their sinful desires. David faced many physical dangers and threats from the enemies of God; but the tempting desires of the flesh were able to conquer him faster than any previous threat of sword and spear. Persecution is undeniably a real danger in these end times. Nonetheless, countless more faithful have been felled by the false promise of freedom and the seductive desires of the sinful flesh.

It is that face of the darkness which is the primary concern of 2 Peter. He is concerned for believers who will live in a world which wants to snuff out the light of God’s Word. He writes to encourage them while they live in the darkness to “pay attention to (God’s Word), as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts” (1:19).

Peter’s second letter offers the Church the proper response to the darkness’ deception and mockery. It explains what might seem to be God’s delay in action. It leads us from darkness to dawn by reminding us (1:13-15; 3:1) of what someone struggling in the darkness needs to hear over and over again: the day is coming soon.

A Light Shining in a Dark Place (3:1-2)

2 Peter 3:1-2 Ταύτην ἤδη, ἀγαπητοί, δευτέραν ὑμῖν γράφω ἐπιστολὴν ἐν αἷς διεγείρω ὑμῶν ἐν ὑπομνήσει τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν ἐντολῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος.

Summary This now, loved ones, is the second letter I wrote to you in which I awaken your pure mind with a reminder to remember the words spoken before by the holy prophets and the command of your apostles from our Lord and Savior.³

Notes

- Jude 17-24 gives a shorter presentation of the very same ideas as 2 Pt 3:1-18, often using similar vocabulary.
- The address, ἀγαπητοί “dear friends,” (EHV ESV, NIV) is a fitting translation. “Beloved” is often used in translations, but that carries more of a romantic connotation in modern English. Does Peter mean “ones loved by God” (cf. Wuest) or “ones I love”? While the former is a correct and good sentiment, the

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all English Scripture quotations are from the Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV).

² All chapter and verse references e.g. (3:1) refer to 2 Peter unless indicated otherwise.

³ Each verse summary translation is my own.

later fits the vocative use better. Also compare with the possessive in 2 Pt 3:15 ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος.

- ἐν αἷς plural, referring to both letters. The same spiritual goal is found in each of his letters.
- ἐν ὑπομνήσει μνησθῆναι “a reminder ...to remember...” the infinitive functions exegetically, namely, it explains ἐν ὑπομνήσει
- εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν “pure/sincere mind” unmixed, pure, here it pertains to spiritual understanding

Peter sets the tone throughout his letter of a concerned spiritual shepherd who sees impending danger which has not yet pulled his readers away from Christ. He is writing to mature believers who “are established in the truth you now have” (1:12). Throughout his letter he never implies that his readers have succumbed to any false teaching. He mentions no specific report of false teachings tolerated within their flock. Instead, he warns of false teachers who will reach them in the near future. He urges them to “make every effort to add (to their faith)” (1:5) and wants those who are mature in faith to keep growing. That concern is most evident by his closing exhortation. “Since you already know these things, be on your guard so that you do not fall from your own firm position by being led astray through the error of the wicked. Instead grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:17–18).

He refers to his readers as ἀγαπητοί “loved ones.” In this way, Peter speaks as a loving shepherd urging his flock to take care. Peter uses this title twice in his first letter while encouraging sanctified living and perseverance in suffering. The apostle Paul uses this form of address most often near the closing portion of his letters while urging sanctified living. He also applies the singular form to individuals who were spiritually mature, faithful workers in ministry. Peter, in turn, applies it to the apostle Paul ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος “our dearly loved brother, Paul” (3:15). In this chapter Peter uses it five times, more than any other chapter in the New Testament. Perhaps most significantly, the term is first applied in this letter when Peter quotes the Father’s description of Jesus as the Son he loves (1:17).

Peter indicates that this letter is part of an ongoing campaign to encourage his readers and that this is (at least) the second letter. If both letters were intended to stir up the minds of his readers with a reminder of God’s Word, then 1 Peter would be an excellent foundation for his efforts. That first letter includes everything in the second article of the Apostles’ Creed; from the leaders of Israel rejecting the Christ, to his exultation and second coming. This second letter, in contrast, has the gospel message presented mostly in passing references to the work of Christ. A previous letter such as 1 Peter, or another unpreserved letter, would explain his quick summary of the gospel. In this letter, he refers to the gospel as “(God’s) precious and great promises” (1:4) and without much further elaboration. A gospel-rich first letter, such as 1 Peter, would also explain his efforts to defend his apparent redundancy in his writing campaign, “I intend always to keep reminding you of these things, even though you already know them” (1:12).

Some question if this “second letter” was written to the same audience as 1 Peter. However, the content and context of his writing would certainly fit for a follow up letter to 1 Peter. While it is possible this letter was written before 1 Peter and even written to another audience, Peter’s impending death (1:14) indicates that this letter likely was written not long after 1 Peter, and thus also from Rome. The growing persecution which Peter wrote about in 1 Peter may very well have come near to overtaking him in Rome. He was a witness of Christ’s sufferings and a “fellow partaker of suffering for Christ” (1 Pt 5:1). While the original target readers could have been another audience, there is no compelling reason to deny the possibility that this letter is the follow up to 1 Peter. For today’s readers, it is the perfect thematic companion and follow-up for dealing with the end times. It must be noted that the authenticity of 2 Peter has been questioned more than any other New Testament letter. This stems primarily from the fact that the early church Fathers were silent regarding it. However, 2 Peter is alluded to several times in the writings of the early Fathers.⁴ It also contains internal evidence which supports apostolic authorship. Some contend the style does not match the clean Greek found in 1 Peter. The

⁴ Clement of Alexandria, Aristides, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus all seem to allude to 2 Peter. For further study see: Picirilli, Robert E “Allusions to 2 Peter in the Apostolic Fathers” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 10 (33) (1988) 59

difference in style is explained, possibly, by the fact that the first letter was written with the help of Silas (1 Pt 5:12). Peter identifies himself in his second letter and appeals to his eyewitness experiences, including one for which he was a special eyewitness. Internal evidence further suggests that Peter and his audience were jointly familiar with Paul's letters. Peter's defense of the authority of Paul's writings would hardly be necessary if this letter were not early in origin.

It should be noted that the authenticity of this letter was not necessarily questioned by the Fathers on the basis of its teaching or content. In fact, 2 Peter was not identified and rejected as spurious by the early Fathers, who had flatly rejected many other letters which were easily identified as falsely attributed to Peter. A full examination of the authenticity of the letter is beyond the scope of this essay. It should suffice to point out that it meets the criteria set by so many Christians for recognition of divine inspiration, namely, 1) it is a Christ-centered letter, 2) it speaks in harmony with the rest of Scripture, and 3) it conveys the divine power of the gospel. Its continued use among early believers, despite its failure to quickly spread as wide as other letters, is a testimony to the ongoing recognition of its divine power. Peter gets right to the core of the gospel. He does more than identify himself; he identifies Jesus as "our God and Savior" (1:1). His letter is centered on this gospel-driven truth.

It is a bit ironic that this letter should be one of the most questioned in the New Testament canon. 2 Peter provides some of the best descriptions of divine inspiration and how to properly handle the Scriptures. He contends that the authors of Scripture did not follow cleverly invented stories, but "but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit" (1:21). Peter places the writings of the apostle Paul on par with the rest of Scripture (3:16), urges the readers to pay attention to the prophets (1:19;3:2), and he either quotes or is quoted by James throughout chapters 2-3.

Peter's stated purpose is to offer encouragement in the end times. He aims to awaken his readers to a state of spiritual alertness. $\Delta\tau\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\omega$ is most often used for waking someone from slumber. The apostle John applies it to a calm sea being stirred up by a storm. It is metaphorically to refer to keeping someone spiritually alert. When Paul uses this same metaphor, he puts it in context of the end times and urges sanctified living. Paul highlights the gospel as our source of power for remaining alert e.g., "weapons of light" (Ro 13:12) and "the hope of salvation" (1 Th 5:8). With these divine tools in mind, he urges spiritual soberness. "We do not belong to the night or the darkness. So then let us not sleep like everyone else, but rather let us remain alert and sober. ...we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet" (1 Th 5:5-8). He even joins with Peter in urging us to remain awake until the coming Day of the Lord. "It is already the hour for you to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is almost over, and the day is drawing near. So let us put away the deeds of darkness and put on the weapons of light" (Ro 13:11-12).

By calling for spiritual sobriety, Peter reminds us of his purpose for writing. He uses the exact same metaphor and wording, "I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to keep you wide awake by reminding you ($\delta\iota\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\acute{\iota}\rho\epsilon\iota\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\mu\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\eta\nu\acute{\eta}\sigma\epsilon\iota$)" (1:13). He is emphatic about his purpose. "I will also make every effort so that after my departure you always have a reminder of these things" (2 Pe 1:15).

Translations diverge here. Is Peter saying he stirs them up to a "pure mind" or that he is stirring up their "pure mind?" Namely, is $\tau\eta\nu\ \epsilon\iota\lambda\iota\kappa\rho\iota\nu\eta\ \delta\iota\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha\nu$ the result of the verb (NIV, MSG, GNB) or the object of the verb (CSB, ESV, EHV, KJV)⁵? While both translations are theologically acceptable, the grammar and context only support the latter. Christians have renewed minds and also continually strive to put on the new self. In this context, the

⁵ NIV "reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."

MSG "reminders to hold your minds in a state of undistracted attention"

GNB "I have tried to arouse pure thoughts in your minds"

CSB "I want to stir up your sincere understanding by way of reminder"

ESV "I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder"

NLT "I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking."

KJV "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance"

choice of translation changes Peter's point of emphasis. He is not rebuking his readers or trying to bring them from spiritual slumber into spiritual sobriety. Rather, he is urging spiritually mature believers to keep strong and to stay alert in the face of pressures and false teachings. Christians, even mature ones, can "fall from your own firm position" (2 Pe 3:17). In fact, some of the false prophets which Peter warns against were evidently once believers. But they fell away from the faith into lies and godlessness (cf. 2 Pt 2:20-24). He wants to "stir up their sincere minds" even though he must admit, "you already know them and are established in the truth you now have" (1:12).

The grammar also supports this translation. Διηγείρω takes an accusative object. The feminine accusative τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν becomes the subject of the infinitive at the start of verse two. "Your sincere minds... to remember." Finally, ὑμῶν modifies διάνοιαν. There is no clear textual evidence for omitting this possessive.

As subtle a difference as these two translations may contain, the proper translation highlights the need for all believers, even the mature, to receive continual reminders of the truth. And spiritual shepherds are reminded that their work ought to include more than evangelism and discipline. It ought to include continual edification and encouragement for those who are mature in faith.

The means for stirring up a believer's sincere mind is the same powerful means which gives faith. Just like in chapter 1, Peter points his readers to the apostles and the prophets. Scripture is the divine means for creating and strengthening faith. He distinguishes the message of the Old Testament Scriptures as things προειρημένων "spoken beforehand." The foreknowledge of God elevates true prophecy far above the speculation and lies of the false teachers. The perfect tense of this attributive adjectival participle brings out the truth that the words of the Old Testament prophets still stand today. The prophets are holy. They shared divine revelation and were themselves blessed through faith in it. The true, holy prophets stand in sharp contrast to the false prophets who are "cursed" (2 Pt 2:14).

Note that there is a rare case of prepositional usage here to describe the intermediate source of revelation. Agency is often expressed in the New Testament with ὑπὸ for God who is the ultimate author of the Scriptures and with διὰ expressing an intermediate agent. For example: ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος (Mt 2:15). Peter makes a rare break from the New Testament authors' distinction of these prepositions by using ὑπὸ for the prophets. However, Peter has already clarified at the end of chapter 1 that the Holy Spirit gave the writers of Scripture their words and carried them along. Context has firmly established that God is the ultimate agent of divine revelation.

Peter affirms the New Testament Scriptures from the apostles right alongside the Old Testament prophets as our source of "divine power" (1:3). Note that τῶν ἀποστόλων is placed between ἐντολῆς and its article, τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν ἐντολῆς "the command of your apostles" while τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος is placed outside. A suitable way to translate this string of genitives at the end of verse two is "the command of your apostles from our Lord and Savior." Christ, who is Lord of all and who took on flesh to save us, is the ultimate source of the apostles' teaching. The apostles, just like the holy prophets, are divinely inspired writers. Their message carries unparalleled weight and authority.

Peter refers here to ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν "your apostles." The possessive pronoun fits well if Peter wrote from Rome and to the same audience as the first letter, namely, to the scattered elect in Asia Minor. He is acknowledging that other apostles, such as Paul, had reached them first. At the end of this letter, he indicates they were personally familiar with Paul's writing, "Paul wrote to you" (3:15). Here ὑμῶν may also be a way of highlighting that the apostles are gifts to the Church from Christ, given for their benefit. Peter identified himself as "a servant and an apostle" (1:1). Though the apostles serve the Church and belong to Peter's readers, they still speak with the authority of Christ.

“Command” does not necessarily need to refer to a singular specific command. The context of this chapter might point the reader to Christ’s command to keep watch and be ready for his second coming. “You also need to be ready for this reason: The Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not expect him” (Mt 24:44). However, the τῆς ἐντολῆς is broad enough to include all of Christ’s teachings. Peter has already demonstrated a broad usage of this term. In the previous chapter, he made a parallel connection between τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς δικαιοσύνης “the way of righteousness” and τῆς παραδοθείσης αὐτοῖς ἀγίας ἐντολῆς “the holy command passed on to them” (2 Pt 2:21). Commands, when used in this broad manner, can include the gospel teachings.

Τῆς ἐντολῆς “the command” also directs us to the law teachings of Christ. The emphasis in this context is on holiness of living in the face of false teaching. Peter leads us to ponder, “What kind of people ought you to be, living in holiness and godliness?” (2 Pe 3:11), and urges his reads to “make every effort to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight” (2 Pe 3:14). Yet it would be misleading to teach that Peter only has the law of Christ in mind. He wants to stir up their minds by reminding them of both Christ’s law and gospel. He points to the promises of Christ as the power for life and for godliness. “He has given us his precious and great promises” (1:4). The promised return of Christ and the new creation will remain his focus, alongside the call to continue in holy living.

Application

How often should a pastor remind his flock that he loves them? Peter does it often. There will be good opportunities for pastors to use terms of endearment. It is fitting to use them often, especially when urging sanctified living.

Ministry will involve an ongoing campaign of encouragement to the flock. If a minister has, for example, not had opportunity to reach the lost on a Tuesday evening, because he was busy teaching an in-depth Bible study to the spiritually mature members of the flock, he hasn’t failed in faithfully shepherding. He has accomplished what must be done for the weak and strong alike. He is fulfilling the charge of Christ given directly to Peter and to all shepherds of God’s flock, “feed my lambs” (Jn 20). Ought not much of a pastor’s work involve continually feeding the mature? Those who have been brought to faith in Christ are in an ongoing struggle to keep from spiritually “slumbering” (1 Th 5:4-6, Ro 13:11-12).

Peter points his readers to the divinely given tools necessary and sufficient to keep the flock spiritually awake and alert. In order to awaken his readers, he reminds them of the powerful Word of God. Pastors today need to constantly affirm divine inspiration and continually rely on the Word’s divine power. How many false teachers today would chafe at Peter’s description of Scripture as given by “holy” men, with the Spirit’s full guiding and at Christ’s bidding? Faithful ministers need to confront false teachers. They can do this by boldly asserting Scripture’s authority. They must keep pointing to the light, their source of truth, as the infallible Word of the Lord given to men.

Today’s pastors who “shepherd God’s flock” (1 Pt 5:2) ought to follow the apostle’s example of working to keep the flock awake in this dark place. Most may not be able to write as well as the evangelist and apostles. Not many can declare wonderful visions like the apostle John or allude to heavenly bliss like the apostle Paul. But all shepherds can make it their goal, as long as they are in the tent of the body, to keep the flock spiritually alert and awake. This is different from merely trying to keep them awake during the sermon. A pastor certainly could try to keep their flock physically alert during the sermon with flashing screens, funny stories, and charismatic presentations. Certainly, there is nothing wrong with using these methods in preaching and teaching. But there is no real power for spiritually stirring up hearts and minds unless it comes from the prophets’ and apostles’ message. “I want to stir up your sincere minds with a reminder to remember the words spoken...” (3:1).

Christians are ever in danger of succumbing to the darkness with spiritual slumber or apathy. The flock is always one deception away from stumbling into the dark. Keep the light always before them until the new day dawns!

Peter relied on that powerful Word. We might fret that there must be something more we should be doing. But if we are preaching and teaching Scripture, we have everything we need, namely, τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν “his divine power for life and godliness” (1:3). The word of the prophets and apostles is a “lamp shining in a dark place” (1:19) - even if that lamp is carried by a pastor with scuff marks on his shoes or by a Christian grandfather with a wrinkled face and limp in his step. The power to stir up minds and hearts comes from the Word. It’s so simple. Peter doesn’t have to invent anything new. He only strives to point his readers to what has already been revealed in Christ through his holy messengers.

“Remember the command... of our Lord and Savior.” This may seem like an unnecessary reminder for those who have “sincere minds,” but Peter wants even those who know these things to keep remembering them. We would be remiss if we did not take a least one minute to review and remember what Christ told us regarding the end times.

Jesus answered them, “Watch out that no one deceives you. ... Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because lawlessness will increase, the love of many will grow cold. But whoever endures to the end will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come (Mt 24:4–14).

A Response to Mockery (3:3-7)

2 Peter 3:3 τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι ἐλεύσονται ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν [ἐν] ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαίχεται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι

Summary First, know this: in the last days mockers who go according to their own desires will come in mockery

Notes

- ἐν textual evidence indicates enough widespread support to include, the translation is not significantly impacted
- Τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες “first, know this” is not necessarily of importance as some translations render it, but here is a first item in a presentation in logical sequence. The same phrase is used at 2 Pt 1:20 when speaking about the importance of divine inspiration. Peter is going to setup an argument against God and then give his defense. He is outlining an orderly apologetic.

The phrase ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν “in the last days” is used in prophecy of end times, e.g., ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (LXX Mi 4:1). It is commonly used by New Testament writers to refer to the end times from the first coming of Christ until his return (Acts 2:17, 2 Ti 3:1, Heb 1:2, Ja 5:3). In the Gospel of John, it is used in singular to refer to the day of resurrection, the final day of the end times. Peter is concerned with all that will happen in the darkness of the last days “until the new day dawns” (1:19).

The noun ἐμπαιγμονή “mockery, mocking” is a hapax legomenon, occurring only once. Its use stems from verb παίζω which in the Septuagint refers to playful dances, sometimes without any mention of scorn, but which are occasionally done for amusement (e.g., Samson’s torture). In the New Testament, this noun form of ἐμπαίκτης occurs only here and Jude 18. There is no evidence of its prior use, and it is apparently coined by them. Both Peter and Jude use it to refer to those who attack Christians with their false teachings and through their derisive words. False teachers will respond to the powerful Word of God with their own arrogant words. “All the harsh words that ungodly sinners spoke against him... their mouths speak boastful things” (Jud 15–16). Peter has already noted how the false teachers operate “by uttering arrogant, empty words” (2 Pt 2:18). Their promises are empty, and their mockery has no basis in truth.

The cognate verb ἐμπαίζω “mock” indicates a derisive insult against someone. It is used by each of the synoptic gospels, especially when referring to those who mocked Christ. The stem ἐμπαίζειν occurs in other substantival forms and is placed on par with the pain inflicted by physical persecution, “Still others experienced mocking (ἐμπαυγμός) and lashes, in addition to chains and imprisonment” (Heb 11:36). Peter is exposing the weapons arsenal of the enemies of Christ.

These mockers are guided by ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν “their desires.” Ἐπιθυμία may be used to indicate a godly desire with a positive connotation. For example, “I have eagerly desired (ἐπιθυμία ἐπεθύμησα) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lk 22:15), and “The LORD will grant what the righteous desire ἐπιθυμία δὲ δικαίου” (LXX Pr 10:24). Often ἐπιθυμία carries a heavy connotation of evil desires. Context makes the connotation clear. Peter earlier paired ἐπιθυμία with the same participle and with the noun μiasμός “defilement, pollution.” Τοὺς ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ μiasμοῦ πορευομένους “those who follow the defiling lust of the flesh” (2 Pt 2:10).

The adjective ἰδίας points to the desire of the sinful flesh. James refers to this desire as the source of our sin. “Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire (τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας), he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death” (Jas 1:14–15). Jude appears to directly quote Peter and equates τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας with ψυχικοί, “unspiritual, natural instinct” of the fallen sinful man:

These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires (κατὰ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἑαυτῶν πορευόμενοι); they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires (κατὰ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίας πορευόμενοι).” These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts (ψυχικοί) and do not have the Spirit (Jude 16–19).

Τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν “their own sinful desires” guide all who teach and follow the lies of false teachers. It stands in contrast to those who are led by Spirit of God. Peter had indicated πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς ἰδίας ἐπλύσεως οὐ γίνεται “No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation” (2 Pt 1:20). If anyone is led by God’s Spirit, they no longer are led by their own ideas, but God’s. But if anyone is led by their own sinful desires, they will tread in evil and share false interpretations. The emphasis behind ἰδίας “their own” is possibly a jab against the gnostic false teachers who claimed to have an elevated understanding and spirit-driven knowledge. False teachers and mockers don’t have anything special. It is their own garbage. Knowledge attained from looking within the human heart is not enlightenment; it is only an ugly and pitiful navel-gazing and is nothing like knowledge from the Spirit’s revelation.

Application

The verbal attacks of false teachers can be destructive and painful. That is why you will see enemies on the school playground tossing out insults before they toss out their fists. That is why you will see young people sinking into depression or despair over a few words spoken against them by a peer. Christians will face this same type of attack, arguably more often than physical attacks for their faith. Are there young Christians in high school who are struggling to adhere to the teaching of a world-wide flood? Absolutely! Is it popular to teach that we can expect the same God to judge every sinner in the world on the last day? It is mocked. Today’s culture ridicules the idea of following divine revelation instead of your own ideas and desires.

How can Christians respond to the mockery of their faith? Christians young and old, no matter how mature they might be in their faith, can end up facing a crisis from verbal attacks. Peter addresses this challenge and gives it due attention. He understands the need to equip his readers with a simple apologetic in the face of ridicule. All pastors ought to prepare their flock for a verbal assault against their faith.

Since he knows it will be coming, Peter staves off defeatism by offering a comforting reminder: the mockers were foretold. God knows about them. “First, know this” is a heads-up to keep Christians from being surprised by insults. Pastors should not allow their flock to become a naïve, unsuspecting target of mockery.

Christ was mocked first. More mockers will come. But Christians will follow Christ. By raising his Son from the dead, the Father has silenced his enemies. Christ is ascended and will return in glory as “the Morning Star” (1:19). And when all the dead are raised, and the new creation is open before us, we too will be vindicated and will rejoice.

Jesus knew his flock would face insults, so he encourages “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt 5:11–12). Further in this chapter Peter leads his readers to see that same blessed outcome for all who trust in Christ.

Peter urges us to watch out for those following their own desires. Scripture makes it absolutely clear that our own desires will lead us away from the Lord. Consider how many misguided people there are who have nothing to go off of other than, “It feels right to me.” There is extraordinarily little authority behind the claim, “I personally don’t like to think that’s true.” Faithful preachers should be quick to point out when people are merely following their own evil desires.

Never mind their mockery. Throughout his letter Peter urges us to pay attention to the only true light in this dark world: the Word of God given by the apostles and prophets.

2 Peter 3:4 καὶ λέγοντες, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ’ ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως.

Summary and saying, “Where is his promised coming? Ever since the fathers fell asleep everything continues the same since the beginning of creation.

Notes

- ἀφ’ ἧς “since the time” is a relative pronoun used after a preposition; it is not unusual to find it has no antecedent. ἀπό is used to indite the time from when something begins “from then on, since.” Supply here ὥρας or ἡμέρας, (cf. Col 1:6, 9) ἀφ’ ἧς became a common formula “since the time”

Peter begins the conclusion of his letter by focusing on the return of Christ and his promised second coming. The false teachers will challenge a key truth of Scripture which they hold in contempt: ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ “his promised coming.” Christ’s promised coming is the start of a glorious new era, his “eternal kingdom” (2 Pt 1:11). To a false teacher this gospel promise is the target of ridicule. To a Christian, however, matters such as the return of Christ are part of the τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα... ἐπαγγέλματα “precious and great promises” (1:4).

In connection with Christ, παρουσία nearly always refers to his second coming in glory at the end of the world and the beginning of the new creation. Peter, however, used this term earlier in the letter to refer to Christ revealing his power and glory at the transfiguration event (cf. 2 Pt 1:16). That was a brief event - only a small foreshadowing of what all people will see at his final coming. Christ will appear with unveiled, divine glory at τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας “the coming day of God” (3:12). It is synonymous with “the day” (1:19) which will soon dawn.

There is a bit of irony in the way the scoffers scorn the promised return of Christ while at the same time refer to their own mortality. They are well aware that if the return of Christ is not imminent, they will join their fathers in death. Saying that the fathers ἐκοιμήθησαν “fell asleep” does not imply that the mockers accept a resurrection. Peter may have in mind a type of mockery of the Christian metaphor. When used figuratively in the New Testament, κοιμάω conveys death as only a temporary state. This verb and others like it were

frequently used in ancient Israel as a metaphor for death, a precedent which dates back centuries (cf. Dn 12:2). However, the euphemism was not used exclusively by Christians who believed in a resurrection. The passive form κοιμᾶσθαι was used since the time of Homer as a euphemism for dying. It was apparently not even the most common euphemism at Jesus' time. Without sufficient context the intended meaning could be obscured. Jesus' own disciples failed to grasp its meaning out of context. "Jesus had been speaking about his death, but they thought he was merely talking about ordinary sleep" (Jn 11:13). Peter's context is clear. The false teachers acknowledge death, even if they don't like to ponder it. And it is clear that they do not acknowledge a resurrection to judgment. These mockers will boldly mock in the face of death itself.

With their ridicule they contend that πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως "all things continue the same since the beginning of creation." Peter does not seem to have in mind the attacks of an atheist. These mockers appear to acknowledge a creation event, at the very least in ridicule. But as Peter's response will indicate, their shared theology will not extend far beyond the acknowledgment of a Creator. They will deliberately forget and deny his powerful working by his Word.

Application

At the heart of the mockery of the false teachers is their denial of a final day of judgment at the return of Christ. False teachers today also ridicule the idea that God would hold anyone accountable. *The Shack*, a movie based on a popular novel by the same title, presents an exchange between the main character, a disgruntled Christian man, and God. "Everyone knows you punish the people who disappoint you," the main character accuses God. God is surprised at this man's misguided ideas about sin and punishment and answers him, "No. I don't need to punish. Sin is its own punishment." How many people today want a feel-good church and a God who only comes in a mystical way in order to make us feel better? Christ's promised return to judge is ignored.

If his second coming isn't ignored, expect it to be attacked. Christ's promised coming will remain the ultimate target of attack. It was the target of God's enemies already from the very onset of the New Testament Church. Jesus asserted to the High Priest and all the Sanhedrin, "I tell you, soon you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mt 26:64). They condemned him for saying this and began to scorn him. "They spit in his face and punched him. Some slapped him" (Mt 26:67). Peter was an eyewitness of these attacks.

How do false teachers become so blind? They follow their own evil desires. At some point, they stop caring about Christ's return or change their theology in order to appeal to a culture and people who want to forget about Christ's return. They follow their own hearts into darkness and dread the thought of a new day dawning with the light of Christ as Lord. The mockery is only a desperate attempt to stave off guilt and the fear of divine retribution. And it is the devil's tool to cow Christians into conformity with all the evil desires of the heart.

This mockery can be a potent attack because even the saints at times join in wondering, "Where is his promised coming?" They may not do it in mockery, but they will at times find themselves doing it in despair. Peter calls on his readers to look for Christ's coming with expectation and eager longing. Even the saints in heaven wonder at God's timing and his delay at judgment. But they do not despair, they only ask in expectation, "O Lord, holy and true, how long until you judge and exact justice for our blood from those who live on the earth?" (Re 6:10)

The saints can use Scripture to see through the empty words of the mockery. Is it really true that πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κτίσεως "all things continue the same since the beginning of creation"? This same sin-hardened reasoning is evident in the teachings of evolution. Advocates of evolution believe we are continuing to advance as a species; they see no imminent end to our existence. Many claim the sun has been burning hydrogen for over 4 billion years and another 4 billion years remain until it is exhausted. Until then their only concern is the once-every-20-million-years chance of a world-altering meteorite strike or a major climate-shattering volcanic eruption.

With a similar thinking, “everything continues the same” is advocated by those who teach a so-called progression of humanity. Walking right in step with evolution is the teaching that the human race is in a continual state of moral advancement. This belief persists even as society plunges further into the darkness of its own evil desires. Yet Peter reveals that if there is something which has not changed: the sinful human heart. The human race is not advancing. Without Christ it remains the same, lost and condemned by sin. Gender confusion leading to induced gender changes, and all types of sexual immorality, are not advancements. They are lies from the darkness which mock God’s creation and his promised second coming.

Of course, there are some false teachers today who do not argue that “all things continue the same.” Some false teachers will work to create a sense of hysteria over climate disaster and predict the world will be uninhabitable within a few short years or a few generations. And, of course, “all things continue the same” is not the mantra of those who calculate a so-called “doomsday clock” for nuclear disaster. Yet Peter’s core warning remains true. The majority of those who teach imminent destruction through climate change would scoff at the idea that God could come to end the world with his judgment against sin. And most of those who advocate the count of a “doomsday” clock to a world-ending nuclear apocalypse see humankind itself as the existential threat, not God as our divine judge.

All the arguments from the scoffers, past and present, ignore God’s working since creation. They ignore the record of the great flood. They ignore the reports of the miracles of the prophets and of Christ. They ignore the death and resurrection of our Lord. Arguments made against the faith often assume that there can be no miracles. They wrongly maintain that “everything remains the same.”

A proper view of the history of humanity would not leave anyone complacent. It would cause all to cry in despair at the wickedness of this world. It would have everyone expecting our Creator to come soon in judgment. Peter is highlighting just how short-sighted the unbeliever can be in his view of history and God’s working. He addresses this misguided view of history next, and he gives us a brief apologetic to use in response to the mockery.

2 Peter 3:5-6 λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι οὐρανοὶ ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι’ ὕδατος συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ, δι’ ὧν ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο

Summary For by maintaining this it escapes their notice that the heavens came into being and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God through which (waters) the world at that time was destroyed by being flooded with water.

Notes:

- λανθάνει αὐτοὺς “it escapes them / it escapes their notice” a similar construction is found in the Spanish “se olvida” or “se pasan por alto” Most English translations render with the Greek object as the English subject of the verb “they forget.”
- Συνεστῶσα “established, put together, constitute, held together” It includes both God’s founding at creation and his ongoing providence for all creation. “All things hold together in him τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν” (Col 1:17).

It is fitting that Peter references the flood event. He mentioned it earlier when speaking about the coming judgment. “God did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others when he brought a flood on the world of ungodly people” (2 Pe 2:5). Jesus referred to it when speaking of the sudden surprise of the coming day of judgment (cf. Lk 17:26-30). Both Luke and Peter mentioned the flood and the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as shocking preludes to the final judgment. Peter’s first letter also mentioned the flood and the judgment of God on those who disobeyed at that time (1 Pt 3:20). Things have not always gone on the same since the beginning of creation. A powerful, divine creator has intervened in the past. The same one who created the world judged it and punished it with the great flood, and he will do it again on the last day (2 Pt 3:6-7).

Given that the flood was a world-wide catastrophe, it is surprising that it is mentioned only a handful of times outside of the Genesis account. Nonetheless, Scripture affirms it as true. To distort or deny the account of a world-wide flood is to deny the authority of Scripture. The flood event is brought up by six different authors of Scripture in seven different books of the Bible. Moses records the event in Genesis, it is arguably alluded to in Psalm 104, affirmed by Christ as recorded in Matthew and Luke, mentioned once in 1 Peter, twice in 2 Peter, and it is indirectly brought up in Hebrews 11:7⁶. Peter further affirms the veracity of Scripture's record of a world-wide flood when he writes, "no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit" (1:21).

False teachers have a selective vision and a biased record of the past. They will claim to have observed everything remaining the same since creation, but at the same time they deny the powerful working of the creator. They deny the past in order to hold onto their views. The causal form of the participle fits well for θέλοντας. The greatest tragedy in history is forgotten τοῦτο θέλοντας "because they maintain this." τοῦτο points us back to everything they said about Christ's coming. The various translations⁷ of this phrase all capture the foolish obstinance of unbelief. They "conveniently forget" (MSG) or "deliberately overlook" (CSB) what creation, history, and the human heart tells them. The human heart actively rebels against the natural knowledge of a powerful creator who hates sin and judges the sinner. It is quick to reject divine revelation.

The phrase γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος συνεστῶσα "earth was formed out of water and through water" is a reference to what we find in Genesis 1. The first three days of creation all involved the presence of water or moving of water. Peter mentions it in order to reference the instrument which God used by the means of his powerful Word. Creation was established τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ "by the word of God." Once more Peter's letter highlights the power of the Word⁸.

Peter joins with Moses, Matthew, Luke, and the writer to the Hebrews in affirming the account of God's judgment in the flood and depicts it as an act of thorough judgment on all creation. The noun form of the participle in this verse is κατακλισμός, which is the etymological root of the English "cataclysm." It is a fitting usage. The entire world at that time was destroyed by being inundated with water. True history reveals a far different story from what false teachers wish to maintain.

⁶ The waters stood above the mountains. ⁷At your rebuke they fled. At the sound of your thunder, they hurried away. ⁸The waters surged up the mountains. They went down into the valleys, to the place that you prepared for them. ⁹You set a boundary that they cannot cross. They will not return to cover the earth (Ps 104:6–9).

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of Man returns. ³⁸In fact, in the days before the flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the very day that Noah entered the ark. ³⁹And they did not realize what was coming until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man returns. (Mt 24:37–39 see also Lk 17:26–27).

These spirits disobeyed long ago, when God's patience was waiting in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In this ark a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water (1 Pe 3:20).

God did not spare the ancient world but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, along with seven others when he brought a flood on the world of ungodly people (2 Pe 2:5).

⁷ EHV: what they are intentionally forgetting

NIV: they deliberately forget

CSB: They deliberately overlook this

MSG: They conveniently forget

KJV: For this they willingly are ignorant of

RVA: por su propia voluntad pasan por alto esto

⁸ His divine power has given us everything we need for life and ... he has given us his precious and great promises" (2 Pe 1:3–4).

"the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸We heard this voice, which came out of heaven" (2 Pe 1:17–18).

"We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it" (2 Pe 1:19).

"men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pe 1:21).

"remember the words spoken earlier by the holy prophets and the command of the Lord and Savior through your apostles" (2 Pe 3:2).

"And now, by that same word, the heavens and earth have been stored up for fire" (2 Pe 3:7).

Application

Peter presents the flood as a world-wide catastrophe. The flood remains a dividing point between conservative Christians and so-called progressive Christians. One side joins Scripture, the other joins mankind's own idea of history. An article from the University of Arizona's department of Ancient Near East History tells people to forget about Noah's ark. It asserts that there never was a world-wide flood. This is a university which presents itself as "An Elite, Globally Respected University Recognized for Outstanding Academics." To remain elite, the University of Arizona (ASU) denies Spirit-guided revelation and asserts, "most biblical and ancient Near Eastern scholars argue that the flood is a mythical story adopted from earlier Mesopotamian flood accounts."⁹ The flood is presented as just a cleverly adapted story, "the flood story appears to be an adaptation and integration of a previously known myth into the theology of Israel."¹⁰ Denial of the great flood is presented by some false teachers as an acceptable first step towards a more enlightened and mature type of Christian belief. In reality it is the first step in a weakened faith that will soon find itself mocking the truth and joining those who "deliberately/intentionally forget" what has been revealed.

Those who dismiss the account of a six-day creation and a world-wide flood often argue that these accounts were readily accepted by the ancient world because they did not have the same advanced understanding in science. They argue, "It is time for Christians to admit that some of the stories in Israel's primordial history are not historical. It is ok to concede that these stories were crafted in a pre-scientific period."¹¹ Peter refutes that assertion. He points out that the ancient world was not quick to believe such miraculous accounts. Scientific advancements haven't changed people's minds regarding the working and power of God. Sin has always left us blind to God's working.

Christians are tempted by mockers to concede that the flood could be a cleverly invented story. If the flood event is fabricated, then so is the doctrine of divine inspiration for Moses, Christ, and the apostles. If it is true, it ought to be defended and taught regularly in all of its entirety. Because of frequent attacks against this account, Christians will need to be prepared to defend it. Pastors can use some of the excellent apologetic resources available today¹² to equip believers. At the very least, they need to affirm and repeat everything Scripture records about the flood event. It has value for today. "Indeed, whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that, through patient endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we would have hope" (Ro 15:4).

If the world can overlook and deny something as powerful as the great flood, why wouldn't it also deny God's judgment or the absolute holiness of the judge? That judgment is coming with Christ on the last day. This is Peter's next point.

2 Peter 3:7 οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Summary And now by the same word (of God) the heavens and the earth are reserved for fire, since they are being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly people.

Notes

- Τεθησαυρισμένοι "are reserved, stored up," is used to refer to storing up items such as grain, money, or something more abstract such as a measure of wrath (cf. Ro 2:5). The passive "being stored up" carries the idea of being preserved for something. With εἰμί + participle it forms a periphrastic perfect. Here it

⁹ "University of Arizona" *News and Interpretations on the Bible and Ancient Near East History* bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/flood357903 (accessed Sept 11, 2022)

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ibid

¹² Some useful resources include *The Lutheran Science Institute* and answersingenesis.org

can serve as an intensive use, the end result is the emphasis, the English present can be the preferred way to translate, “are stored up.”¹³

Peter once again underscores the continual working of the word of God. The Word has been active from the beginning and will act again. The intensive pronoun τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ “by this same Word (of God)” points us back to the same powerful word that formed this world (3:5). The adversative δὲ νῦν “but now” is in contrast to τότε “then, that time (of the flood)” (3:6). It also brings us back to the current ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν “in the last days” (3:3). The last days are leading to the singular ἡμέραν κρίσεως “day of judgment.” Once, judgment came with water. At this present time the heavens and earth are stored up and kept for judgment by fire. It will all take place by the same powerful Word of God.

There will be no escape on judgment day. The heavens and the earth, and all the ungodly sinners in them, already have a reservation sign. Not even death can release them from what is coming upon them. Peter earlier used ἡμέραν κρίσεως together with the verb τηρέω “the Lord knows how to ... keep the unrighteous under guard (τηρεῖν) until the day of judgment (εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως), in order to punish them” (2:9). Just as there was no escape for the ungodly from the inundating waters of the flood there will be no escape from the fire of the last day.

Some will challenge what is meant by ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων “destruction of the ungodly people.” Groups such as the Seventh Day Adventist take the position that Peter is teaching total annihilation. On the one hand, ἀπώλεια is used to refer to utter ruin or complete destruction. Sometimes it is translated as annihilation. At other times is shorthand for meeting a violent death. For example, the Hebrew of Daniel 2:5 נִתְבַּרְתָּ לְחִצְיָהּ “you will be made into pieces/limbs, i.e., you will be dismembered” was translated as εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἔσεσθε (LXX). In Scripture ἀπώλεια is frequently placed opposite of salvation and is left as the only alternative (cf. Mt 7:13, He 10:39, Phil 1:28).

The verb form, ἀπόλλυμι (3:9), refers to what ultimately takes place in hell. Jesus refers to those who can kill (ἀποκτείνω) the body but not kill (ἀποκτείνω) the soul. But God is able to ἀπόλλυμι “ruin/destroy” both in hell. “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear the one who is able to destroy (ἀπολέσαι) both soul and body in hell” (Mt 10:28). This destruction is the fate of every unbeliever, which is more than just an annihilation, it is everlasting punishment.

The verb ἀπόλλυμι can simply mean “to die.” However, this verb has a broader usage, and like the noun it is placed opposite from possessing eternal life. E.g., μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον “not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Peter’s use of it here should be understood with the broader sense in mind and according to the “curse” (2:14) and the “gloom of darkness” (2:17) which God will bring on the ungodly. The final word on what awaits the ungodly is given to Scripture. Peter has already asserted his agreement with the prophets’ and apostles’ teachings. The fate of the unbeliever is described in Scripture as everlasting shame and unending fire, a bodily existence in ongoing suffering.

- “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the *eternal fire*, which is prepared for the Devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41).
- “(the godless false teachers) for whom *the gloom of darkness* has been reserved” (2 Pe 2:17).
- “Many who are sleeping in the dusty ground will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, to *everlasting contempt*” (Da 12:2).
- But the children of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where *there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Mt 8:12, also 22:13; 25:3).
- “It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than to be thrown into the *eternal fire with two hands or two feet*” (Mt 18:8).

¹³ Wallace, 575

- “You have started *a fire in my anger that will burn forever*” (Je 17:4).
- “Sodom and Gomorrah ... serve as an example of those who are going to suffer *the punishment of eternal fire*” (Ju 7).
- “The Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are. There *they will be tormented day and night, forever and ever*” (Re 20:10).
- “Where *their worm does not die*, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk 9:44,46,48; quoting Is 66:24).

God’s just verdict leads to the punishment of hell. But he not the reason for such punishment. It is reserved for sinners on account of their own doing. Peter refers to the self-ruin caused by distorting Scripture *ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν* “to their own destruction” (3:16). It is a destruction reserved for *τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων* “ungodly people.” The Lord does not want anyone *ἀπολέσθαι* “to perish” (3:9). Many who struggle with the doctrine of eternal punishment fail to fully grasp this point.

Application

This verse is a sobering and hard-hitting statement of the law. Apart from the rescue of Christ, this world and every sinner, is doomed to God’s fiery judgment. Part of preaching the law includes preaching the fiery judgment of God for which all sinners are kept in reserve.

It keeps coming back to the Word of God. Peter started this chapter by pointing to the revealed knowledge of God through the prophets and the apostles. He then spoke about the powerful creation and flood worked by the Word of God. He further elaborates here on the working of “this same Word of God.” When outlining God’s plan of salvation, a preacher ought to keep the focus on God’s Word and his working.

The day of judgment refers to the single day when all are raised and judged by Christ. We preach about death, about sin, and about the eternity of hell. Does *ἡμέραν κρίσεως* “the day of judgment” need more emphasis in an increasingly tolerant culture which seeks to downplay the punishment of sin? Peter includes this important day when speaking about the severity of sin. Preaching the law in all its severity opens the way for preaching the gospel light in all its glory. Peter does not hold back the law of God because he is working towards sharing the gospel, the promised coming of Christ which “we are looking forward to” (3:14).

The Day is Coming Soon (3:8-14)

2 Peter 3:8 Ἐν δὲ τούτῳ μὴ λανθανέτω ὑμᾶς, ἀγαπητοί, ὅτι μία ἡμέρα παρὰ κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία.

Summary But do not let this one thing escape your notice, loved ones: one day for the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day.

Notes

The last time Peter used *λανθάνω*, he applied it to the ungodly who forget about God’s judgment and powerful working by his Word. However, Peter is not speaking his encouragement to the ungodly. The address *ἀγαπητοί* once again softens the tone. The harsh indictment of the false teachers in chapter 2 stands in contrast to the encouraging reminders to believers who are “friends, beloved.”

As noted earlier, the mockers were “intentionally forgetting” (3:5). Believers should not make a similar mistake regarding how they view history. The English Standard Version does well capturing the contrast which Peter makes here between the mockers and his readers: “For they deliberately overlook this fact ...But do not overlook this one fact” (3:5,8 ESV).

The EHV is nearly alone in not separating the text here with a new paragraph mark. Peter began his apologetic with τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες “first know this” (3:3). Ἐν δὲ τοῦτο “but... this one thing” leads us to a major point and separates verses 8-9. Peter has already presented the first part of his response, namely, that God has worked by his Word to judge sinners in the past and will do it again. This second part of his response will explain God’s apparent delay in action.

The preceding verses set the stage for what might be an objection to the prophets and apostles’ teachings. Someone might look at the whole of revelation of Scripture and all the history and prophecy recorded and ask, “Why doesn’t God just step in and put a stop to it all right now?” They might even object, “clearly he doesn’t care.” We encounter this challenge against God throughout Scripture. It comes from both the enemies of God and occasionally from his own people (e.g., Habakkuk). Peter masterfully summarizes the objection made against God and then in verses 8-9 presents God’s gracious answer.

Peter does not make up his description of God, who transcends time. He alludes here to the writing of Moses “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day, like yesterday that has gone by, or like a watch in the night” (Ps 90:4). And he expands Moses’ axiom to reveal God’s great patience: μία ἡμέρα ... ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία “one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.” This is both a chiasm and a paradox. This phrase shares a centering structure which is sometimes found in other paradoxical statements in Scripture, for example, πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι καὶ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι “the first will be last and the last will be the first” (Mt 19:30). Peter’s explanation of how God views time is an apparent contradiction. His point is that God’s understanding of time is simply beyond our comprehension.

This verse has been used to misinterpret δι’ in Genesis 1. Such a poor hermeneutic can easily be refuted. Moses repeats throughout Genesis 1 that “there was evening and there was morning” in order to establish the boundaries of each single day. In addition, when referencing the creation event, δι’ refers to an ordinary week with six ordinary days (Gen 20:8-11). Furthermore, the Genesis account uses language which presents things from mankind’s perspective, and it contains ordinary terms, not symbolic ideas. Finally, Peter is not writing about the six-days of creation here. He is clearly not interested in reinterpreting the creation account for evolutionist. He is defending God against those who accuse him of not keeping his promise to come and judge the world. His axiom is intended to help the reader understand that God is not tardy, but unfathomably patient. “The Lord is not slow to do what he promised, *as some consider slowness*” (3:9).

Application

Comprehending God is beyond the ability of sinful man. Hostility towards God’s promises is rooted in the horrible and blinding effects of our sin. Sin leaves us in a condition which we cannot even fathom. We do not see our faults, or our inability to comprehend the divine. We struggle to comprehend or accept the good plans of God and the perfect timing of those plans. But his timetable remains fully in line with his absolute justice and his unfathomable mercy.

When we are tempted to join with mockers and question God’s timetable, we must repent with Job. The Lord challenged Job, “Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words” (Job 42:3)? We can only join in repenting with Job and say, “I have made statements about things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know” (Job 42:3).

The Word of the Lord does not contain irrational statements. Paradoxes about the Lord are true. They are statements in tension which help to express a truth about God. They help explain how God’s understanding is beyond ours. “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how untraceable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his adviser” (Ro 11:33–34)?

Paradoxes are common in Scripture to teach truths about God and man. When a scriptural paradox is applied to sinful man, it remains true because of our *depravity* in sin. “You will hear clearly, but you will never understand. You will see clearly, but you will never perceive” (Mt 13:14). But when applied to God’s gracious working for sinners, Scripture’s paradoxes are only irrational on account of the mysteriously unfathomable *grace* of God. “Whenever I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Co 12:10). “The last will be first and the first will be last” (Mt 19:30).

We embrace these paradoxes with faith in God’s gracious working, “Humble yourselves under God’s powerful hand so that he may lift you up at the appointed time” (1 Pe 5:6). We set aside our own reason for the un failing truth of divine revelation. “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this world, let him become a fool so that he may become wise” (1 Co 3:18).

You may not be able to help the mocker understand God’s perfect timing, but you can hold to the truth in faith that his timing is always perfect. Only faith can accept the Lord’s working as always good. Every Christian must join with the Psalmist and become a little child before their Father in heaven. “LORD, my heart is not haughty, and my eyes are not proud. So I do not intrude into great matters or into things too wonderful for me” (Ps 131:1).

No one can fully accept Peter’s brief apologetic regarding God’s apparent delay without first believing that God knows what is best and his will is always best. By faith we know that fact remains true despite our perceptions. “Certainly my plans are not your plans, and your ways are not my ways, declares the LORD. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my plans are higher than your plans” (Is 55:8–9). What frustrates us now will be gone when the new day comes. Our perception of time will be undoubtably changed at Christ’s return, the end of time when χρόνος οὐκέτι ἔσται “there will be no more delay” (Rev 10:6).

2 Peter 3:9 οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τινος ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι.

Summary The Lord is not slow in regard to the promise, as some understand slowness, but he is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.

Notes

Here Peter presents one of his greatest gospel encouragements and the center of his apologetic regarding God’s timing. Βραδύνει κύριος “the Lord is not slow.” Βραδύνω does not necessarily mean objectively slow. It can refer to a relative slowness according to what might be anticipated or according to the perception of others. Paul used it to refer to a change in his schedule. “Although I hope to come to you soon...if I am delayed (ἐὰν δὲ βραδύνω)” (1 Ti 3:14–15). God, however, does not take longer than he anticipated. He only takes longer than sinners might anticipate.

Τῆς ἐπαγγελίας refers primarily to his promised second coming (3:4). It includes the promise of judgment, the destruction of the world, and the new creation where the righteous will live forever (3:10-13). This promise is recorded throughout the pages of Scripture by the prophets and apostles (3:2). Thus, Peter’s letter comes full circle here. He opened with a focus on the “precious and great promises” of God (2 Pe 1:4). All his promises will be kept.

The noun form βραδύτητα is not found elsewhere in the New Testament or Septuagint. It was used by Philo to refer to the hesitation of Eve. “And he on one occasion coming to the wife of the first created man, reproached her with her slowness and her excessive prudence, because she delayed and hesitated to gather the fruit which was completely beautiful to look at.”¹⁴ Josephus used it to refer to the army of Israel, hesitating in fear to march

¹⁴ Charles Duke Yonge with Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 22.

against the Philistines, “from the slowness of their march and want of courage.”¹⁵ It is related to the noun βραδύς which James used to encourage Christians to be βραδύς εἰς τὸ λαλῆσαι, βραδύς εἰς ὀργήν “slow to speak, slow to become angry” (Ja 1:19). Patience is certainly the idea which Peter ties in here with God’s apparent βραδύτητα. God is now slow ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς “but he is patient with you.”

Note the way ἡγέομαι is used by Peter throughout his letter. The perceptions and thought processes of believers and unbelievers are strikingly opposite. Unbelievers consider (ἡγέομαι) God’s slowness as inaction and failure (3:9). And they “consider it a pleasure (ἡδονὴν ἡγούμενοι) to carouse in the daytime” (2:13). In contrast, Peter writes, “I think it is right (δίκαιον δὲ ἡγοῦμαι), as long as I am in this tent, to keep you wide awake by reminding you (of the gospel)” (1:13). And he urges his readers to have a completely different view of God’s apparent delay in coming. “Regard (ἡγεῖσθε) the patience of our Lord as salvation” (3:15). The indefinite pronoun ὡς τινες βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται “as some consider slowness” brings to mind the mockers in who take God’s delay as a failure to keep his word. God is not, in fact, slow. It is only a matter of perception.

All misperceptions of God are clarified with the strong adversative to introduce the explanation: ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς “but he is patient with you.” Peter first makes application directly to his readers and to all Christians. There are some texts here which read εἰς ἡμᾶς. The reading ὑμᾶς has greater evidence. Both readings have Peter targeting believers. One cannot appreciate the full measure of God’s patience until it is first applied to self.

The verb μακροθυμεῖ often has a positive connotation. Jesus used this term to teach about God’s forbearing and forgiving patience. “Then the servant fell down on his knees in front of him, saying, ‘Master, be patient with me μακροθύμησον ἐπ’ ἐμοί, and I will pay you everything!’ The master of that servant had pity on him, released him, and forgave him the debt” (Mt 18:26–27). The cognate noun is the LXX translation for מְרַחֵם אֱלֹהִים . which God uses to describe himself. The Greek noun is a compound with similar meaning, μακρός + θυμός “long to anger.” “The LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed: ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger (μακρόθυμος), and overflowing with mercy and truth’” (Ex 34:6).

Peter makes clear that God’s patience extends far beyond the Church. The marvelous will of God is that he displays mercy to everyone. God’s patience is based on his desire, μὴ βουλόμενός τις ἀπολέσθαι “not wanting any to perish.” This gracious will of God is the reason the Son had to suffer, so that forgiveness might be won for all. God revealed his gracious will by sending his Son to save the world. His gracious will is continually seen by his ongoing and great patience before he sends his Son to judge the world. His will is found in his answer to Jesus’ prayers the night before he died. Does the Father will anyone perish? The Son knew the answer. “Father, if you are willing εἰ βούλει, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). The Son, true God, shared that same gracious will.

This revelation of the will and mercy of God is one of the high points of Peter’s letter. It is encouragement for the end times. God does not desire that anyone perish, ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι “but all to come to repentance.” Χωρέω is used frequently in the Septuagint and New Testament to refer to something which reaches capacity or holds its fill. Figuratively it can indicate “make room,” namely, “hold or accept.” (e.g., οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον τοῦτον “not everyone can accept this saying” (Mt 19:11). Repentance is not just a one-time decision or act. It is the work of God on the human heart and a spiritual condition attained through faith. It is a goal which God wills everyone to reach. Some translations include this aspect, e.g., “but that all should reach repentance” (ESV) or “sino que todos procedan al arrepentimiento” (RVA). However, this nuance is lost in some translations which translate μετάνοια as an infinitive, “(God) wants everyone to repent” (NLT).

¹⁵ Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987), 186.

Application

Let's talk about Βραδύνω. Our clouded, sinful perceptions will make us think that our God is like us, slow or unfaithful. Peter knows that God's timing may, at times, be misperceived because of mankind's limited view of time. There is a significant difference between hesitating to keep your word and delaying out of patience. The slowness of God should always be understood as the latter, never the former. These misperceptions of God's timing make the preacher's job of outlining the plan of salvation all the more important. We need to keep his promises near, even if their fulfillment seems far away.

Someone might expect to read here "he is patient with them," rather than "he is patient with you." But Peter makes a direct application to his readers. Christians ought to first contemplate his great patience for themselves before they start to wonder at his patience for others. And that patience is greater than we might think! For him one day is as a thousand years! How great is the patience of God who is aware of every millisecond of our sinning! We ought to tremble at the timeless nature of our God as he deals with our sins.

But God, who is love, is also by definition patient. Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ "love is patient" (1 Cor 13:4). Do these traits always go hand in hand in our evangelism endeavors? Should an evangelist ever get so discouraged by the mockers that he ceases to include them in his evangelistic efforts?? Should a pastor ever view a person as so far lost that God has lost interest in their repentance and salvation? If the world has not yet ended, it is because God is patient with you and also patient with the world around you.

God's ongoing patience means that evangelism efforts are never going to be a waste of time. God gives his Church time so that they can give their time to a dying world. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the time to reach the lost. Now is the time to serve our patient, merciful God. He does not desire that any perish, quite the opposite!

Peter's letter is filled with law. He includes warnings against false teachers and indictment against the ungodly. With eager urging he commands believers to keep growing in sanctified living. But here, also, is one of the strongest of his gospel statements, and arguably one of the most comforting gospel statements for all who strive to share the gospel with a dark world. The truth that "God is patient with me... with all" ought to encourage us all in these end times.

This letter offers a good approach to Christian apologetics. Peter masterfully carries us from the mockery of the mockers to the all-surpassing grace of God for sinners. How does God respond to those who defy him and deliberately forget about his working? He displays the patience which only the true and merciful God could display. He provides the forgiveness and escape from judgment which only the true and merciful God could provide. Good Christian apologetics lead through the law and directly to the gospel message.

God's great patience calls for patience in his people - a patience that comes with faith. Christians must join with Peter in remembering the words of the prophets spoken beforehand. "Indeed, the vision is waiting for the appointed time. It longs for fulfillment and will not prove false. *If it seems slow in coming*, wait for it, because it will certainly come and will not be delayed" (Hab 2:3).

There is a mysterious, divine tension between patience and justice. Mankind, in stubbornness, now lives between God's judgment and his great desire for all to be saved. This is our time of grace - our time to come to repentance and find salvation through faith in Christ. "Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation" (3:15).

This is what the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, says: If you repent and wait quietly, you will be saved. Your strength will depend on quietness and trust. But you refused. ...But the Lord is eager to be gracious to you. He waits on high to have mercy on you, for the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all those who long for him (Isaiah 30:15,18).

God's character and his will lead us to the doctrine of universal justification and universal atonement. God has a goal for everyone still alive today. He desires that they all to come to a new birth, a knowledge of the truth, a turn of faith from the wickedness of sin to his incredible mercy. Peter is emphatic about God's patience being even for those who mock him. The gospel is all inclusive. Τίνας... ἀλλὰ πάντα "(not) any...but all" captures God's universal plan of salvation. Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον "For God so loved the world" (Jn 3:16 cf. also 1 Ti 2:4). After we marvel at his patience for us, God's revealed will directs our evangelism efforts and makes clear our target audience. "(Christ Jesus) gave himself as a ransom for all people" (1 Ti 2:5-6).

May God bless his people today with a response to mockery that is filled with the same powerful law and abounding gospel.

2 Peter 3:10-12 Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτῃς, ἐν ἣ ὁ οὐρανὸς ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται. 11 τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων ποταποὺς δεῖ ὑπάρχειν [ὑμᾶς] ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ εὐσεβείαις, 12 προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας δι' ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται.

Summary And the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing sound, and the elements will be destroyed by burning up and the earth and its works will be exposed. Since all these things will be destroyed what sort of (people) ought you to be in holy conduct and piety since you look forward to and are eager for the coming of the day of God in which the heavens will be destroyed with burning and the elements will melt away with heat?

Here we find a unified section in which Peter repeats imagery of a sudden, burning judgment. Within the description of judgment is a direct application for his readers: the destruction of the world ought to have a sobering effect on Christians.

The flow of thought can be summarized:

3:10 many are *not* looking for it; everything will be burned up

3:11 since this will happen, what ought it impress on you

3:12 you *are* looking forward to it; everything will be burned up

Peter draws on a common simile of Scripture, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." Jesus described his coming with the same figurative expression. "Look, I come like a thief" (Rev 16:15 Cf. also Mt 24, Lk 12). Paul used the simile, "know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night" (1 Th 5:2). A thief is an unpleasant surprise for all those who do not expect it. Thus, it is understood by this expression that despite what God desires not all will come to repentance.

Part of the surprise will include ῥοιζηδόν. This adverb is built off of an apparent onomatopoeia, ῥοῖζος, which refers to the whooshing or whistling sound that is heard as something moves through the air. This is the only time this root occurs in the New Testament and Septuagint. Nonetheless, prophecies regarding God's coming often include a great noise. "I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory" (Eze 43:2). "His voice was like the sound of rushing waters" (Rev 1:15). Just as he did at the start of his letter, Peter involves multiple senses and employs vivid metaphors; with these he draws the reader in (i.e., darkness, light, seeing, hearing, stains, spots, etc.)

Peter echoes the same verb as Christ when describing how the heavens and earth will παρέρχομαι, "pass away, disappear" (Mt 5:18; 24:35; Mk 13:31; Lk 21:33; cf. Lk 16:17). The basic building blocks of our existence, στοιχεῖον, will be destroyed with intense heat. When στοιχεῖον is translated "elements" it does not mean, of

course, elements in the modern scientific sense. It refers to the basic underlying materials of which everything is composed. Λύω “to loose, to reduce, to release” is a slightly different verb from ἀπόλλυμι “perish” (ἀπό + ὄλλυμι) which Peter applied to the destruction from the flood and the fate of the unrepentant (3:6,9). The very building blocks of our existence, στοιχεῖα (3:10) will be broken apart and destroyed. If the elements are unraveled, it equates to the total dismantling of all things. Τούτων πάντων ... λυομένων “all things... will be dissolved/destroyed.”

The phrase γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα “the earth and works in it” is a compound subject. Its verb presents a textual critical question. The context here anticipates a word for destruction, perishing, or burning. Instead, it has the future passive of εὐρίσκω “be found.” The difficulty of understanding the reading εὐρεθήσεται is attested by the later variant reading which adds to the text to offer some clarification εὐρεθήσεται λυόμενα, “will be found destroyed” (℣⁷²). In light of the apparently unexpected verb many English versions prefer to use the reading κατακαήσεται “will burn up.”

However, the seemingly more difficult reading εὐρεθήσεται “will be found” can be properly understood without too much difficulty. Εὐρίσκω is used at times in a forensic manner, namely as presenting the discovery of judicial evidence. Pilate announced, ἐγὼ οὐδεμίαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν “I found in him no basis for a charge” (Jn 18:38, cf. also Lk 23:4; Jn 19:4; Ac 13:28; 23:9). Paul used it to refer to God’s declaration on the day of judgment “that I might be found in him (εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ) not having my own righteousness from the law” (Ph 3:9). Finally, the future passive of εὐρίσκω would play well here in contrasting with the aorist passive of εὐρίσκω in 3:14. On the one hand, the earth and all the works in it will be found/exposed (εὐρίσκω) at the destruction of this world. On the other hand, the believer can be eager and look forward to being found (εὐρίσκω) spotless, blameless, and at peace with Christ in the new creation.¹⁶

When the adjective ποταπός “what sort” is applied to people, it can refer to their reputation or way of life. E.g., “If this man were a prophet, he would realize who is touching him and what kind of woman ποταπή ἢ γυνὴ she is, because she is a sinner” (Lk 7:39). It is imperatival or exclamatory, but is labeled by some grammars as interrogative, despite no other clear example of its usage as an interrogative in koiné Greek. The force of many of these exclamations in Greek is like a rhetorical question. An answer is not sought. Instead, an obvious unspecified quantity or quality is inferred in order to make a point. Thus, it could be translated as a rhetorical question in English.

Δεῖ can refer to a necessity for obtaining a result; or it can simply mean something which is not necessarily a forgone conclusion, but which ought to take place because it would be most fitting. Here it is the latter and can be translated as “ought to be”. The NIV creates a new sentence for clarity. “What kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.” The CSB refrains from making it interrogative. “It is clear what sort of people you should be in holy conduct and godliness.” The ESV makes it exclamatory. “What sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...!”

To discuss sanctification Peter draws on a few terms which he used earlier. Αναστροφή was used in chapter 2 for the false teachers’ ἀσελγεία ἀναστροφῆς “godless conduct” (2:7). Εὐσέβεια here stands in contrast to the conduct of the false teachers’ moral depravity, ἀσέλγεια, which is mentioned three times in chapter 2. In chapter 1, Peter mentioned how Christians have everything they need for “life and godliness ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν” (1:3). The standard set by God is holiness, ἀγίας. Peter’s first letter called for this same standard. “Rather, just as the one who called you is holy, so also be holy in everything you do. For it is written, “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Pt 15-16).

Peter’s call for sanctified living is knit in tightly with his gospel encouragement. Προσδοκάω indicates suspense or eager expectation. Here Peter surrounds his first use of the word with fire - almost as if to hint that his readers ought to be in fearful suspense. He even repeats the verb as a cause for sanctified living. But he

¹⁶ See notes on 3:14 for more thematic connections between 3:11-12 and 3:14.

resolves any tension and centers his use of προσδοκᾶω on our expectation of God's promised new creation. Κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν "according to his promise we look forward" (3:13). The object is "the day of God" which is not just the destruction of everything; that day also includes the promised new creation, our eternal home.

The present active accusative participles προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας could be translated as temporal "while you look forward to, while waiting." A Christian's eager longing fits well in light of the discussion on God's delay and apparent slowness. A causal "since you are looking forward" might also fit.

Σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας is most often translated as "hasten the coming day of God." Σπεύδω can have a transitive force meaning, "cause to happen, speed up." It is at times, however, translated with the idea of being eager for something. "A throne will be established in mercy. In the tent of David a judge will sit on the throne in truth, seeking justice, eager to bring righteousness (σπεύδων δικαιοσύνην)" (LXX Is 16:5). It is noteworthy that Peter used the lexical cognate, σπουδάζω, three times in this letter to refer to eagerness¹⁷. He also used the noun, σπουδή, in this same sense. "After applying every effort (σπουδὴν πᾶσαν), add moral excellence to your faith" (1:5). Admittedly his use of σπεύδω may have no direct connection to σπουδάζω. He may even be making a play on similar words with different shades of meaning intended.

Peter does not elaborate on what is meant by σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας "hasten the coming day of God." Believers can influence the will of God, even his timetable for judgment. He does say that God's delay in these end times is based on his patient waiting for people to come to repentance. Furthermore, Peter preached a message with the same idea, "Therefore repent and return to have your sins wiped out, so that refreshing times may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you" (Ac 3:19–20). Finally, Jesus spoke of the necessity of evangelism as part of God's plan before the end, "This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14).

But even if believers might have an impact on God's timing, it would misrepresent Peter to say the end is dependent on believers doing their part. The Good News Translation implies that God's timing is dependent on our sanctified lives and perhaps our mission work. "You wait for the Day of God and do your best to make it come soon" (GNB). The main verb of this long sentence in 11-12 is δεῖ and it points to the genitive absolute, "since everything will be destroyed in this way." The law and gospel guide and motivate a believer to sanctified living. But God does not need us to do our part in order to complete his unconditional promises.

The translation "do your best to make it come soon" (GNB) implies that the laziness of the church is the reason God must delay, not his own patience. Rabbinic tradition also places the emphasis on humanity to bring about the Messiah's advent. "The Rabbis had two apt sayings: 'It is the sins of the people which prevent the coming of the Messiah. If Jews would genuinely repent for one day, the Messiah would come', and 'If Israel would perfectly keep the Torah for one day, the Messiah would come.'"¹⁸ We certainly ought to be rebuked for any lack of repentance and any zeal to evangelize the lost. And Christians ought to strive each day to live more godly lives. But Peter has already made clear God is patient. This is a gospel truth, not a biting rebuke or an indictment of the Church. God's reason for delay is his own purpose and plan, not something dependent on us. We can only eagerly await his return, await with readiness, serve him daily, and pray for him to hasten his coming.

¹⁷ Therefore, brothers, be more eager (σπουδάσατε) to make your calling and election sure for yourselves (2 Pt 1:10). I will also make every effort (σπουδάσω) so that after my departure you always have a reminder of these things (2 Pt 1:15).

Therefore, dear friends, as you look forward to these things, make every effort (ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε) to be found in peace, spotless and blameless in his sight (2 Pt 3:14).

¹⁸ Michael Green, 2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary, vol. 18, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 165.

This section repeats vocabulary and the picture of a burning judgment on the last day. This repetition creates the effect of the reader being surrounded by the all-consuming fire of God's judgment against this world. But living within the world, which is reserved for judgment, are the "beloved." They no longer need to dread the fire of his judgment. They are looking forward to that day and they live in reverence and fear.

Application

God's coming will be unexpected. How much more won't it be unexpected for those who mock his promised return? It will be the greatest surprise to those who deliberately forget about the power of his Word in creation and his response at the time of the flood.

But the second coming of Christ and the fiery destruction of this world will not be a surprise to us. We eagerly look forward to it! Dare we look forward to rejoicing on the day the world burns up? On the one hand, no. We desire all to repent and be saved (3:9). On the other hand, yes, we do dare to *look forward* to the day of judgment (3:11-14). It is the day the sun of righteousness will rise. It will be the start of a new day, a new era for us. The sentiment expressed here is similar to the closing of Malachi.

Look! The day is coming, burning like a blast furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble. The day that is coming will set them on fire, says the LORD of Armies, a day that will not leave behind a root or branch for them. But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise, and there will be healing in its wings. You will go out and jump around like calves from the stall. You will trample the wicked. They will surely be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I take action, says the LORD of Armies (Mal 4:1-3).

Our response to the destruction will be similar to Noah's. We never are informed about Noah's attitude toward the destruction of the whole earth. We are meant to focus on what God desired. That is what Noah desired. In the end Noah stepped into a new world. The first act of Noah in the new world was praise to the Lord. "Noah built an altar to the Lord" (Ge 8:20). That is the same type of response the redeemed saints will display after this present world is destroyed and they first step on to the new earth.

"You look forward to and hasten the coming of the day of God." Certainly this translation is not entirely out of line from the rest of Scripture. Our attitude and prayers do change history! That includes the timetable by which God operates in mercy and judgment for this world. Pray for mercy and for justice, knowing both are the will of God. And don't just pray regarding Christ's return -live a life that is fitting for one who expects and looks forward to his return. As Luther is attributed with saying, "Preach [and live] as if Jesus was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is returning tomorrow."

Peter is not teaching some rabbinical idea that our virtuous deeds will directly influence God's timing. Instead, he is stressing the grace of a God who is patient and who responds in grace to the desires of his people. Did the outcry of Lot (cf. Ge 18:20, 2 Pt 2) hasten God's judgment? And did the plea for mercy from Abraham recorded in Genesis 18 delay God's judgment fire? It had an influence! The saints in heaven plead with God to hasten his plans, "O Lord, holy and true, how long until you judge and exact justice for our blood from those who live on the earth" (Re 6:10)? Scripture closes with this prayer. "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Re 22:20).

Peter has built up a response to those who might be tempted to despair at the delay of Christ's return. He follows the same line of thought as Psalm 73. Believers are spiritually awakened when they reflect on the final end of those who follow their own desires.

Have I really kept my heart pure for nothing? Have I kept my hands clean in vain? ¹⁴I have been plagued all day. My punishment comes every morning. ¹⁵If I had said, "I will speak like this," I would certainly have betrayed the circle of your children. ¹⁶When I tried to understand this, it was very troubling to me, ¹⁷until I went to the sanctuary of God. *Then I understood their end.* ¹⁸Surely you place them on slippery places. You cause them to fall into destruction. ¹⁹How

quickly they come to ruin, completely destroyed by terrors!²⁰They are like a dream when someone wakes up. So when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them like an illusion.²¹Yes, my heart was bitter, and I was torn up inside.²²I was unthinking and ignorant. I was a dumb animal before you.²³Yet I am always with you. You hold me by my right hand.²⁴With your guidance you lead me, and afterward, you will take me to glory. (Ps 73)

Psalm 73:24 also contains our full motivation. There is more than the sobering destruction of the wicked. There is the gift of God for all who trust in him. He takes them to glory. Ultimately Peter follows the Psalmist and incorporates the gospel as our motivation and our hope. This glorious gift of God is what he takes up next.

2 Peter 3:13 καινούς δὲ οὐρανούς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ.

Summary But according to his promise we are looking forward to a new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Notes

Peter utilizes the inclusive we for the first time since chapter 1 with προσδοκῶμεν “we are looking forward”. Every believer lives for the promised new day. The resurrection isn’t specifically mentioned in this letter. However, Peter leads us to see eternal life as our promised goal. He says we are “partakers in the divine nature” (1:4); he says God has “richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 :11). A striking metaphor in chapter 1 depicts what will come with the return of Christ. It will be the start of a brand-new era, a new day. “Until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts” (1:19). Finally, even though Peter knew by special revelation from Jesus that he would soon die (2 Pt1:14), he confesses his faith in the resurrection. Here he includes himself and all believers as future beneficiaries of God’s new creation: “According to his promise we are looking forward.”

Peter does not have to say, “we ought to look forward.” He assuredly knows that they are. The restoration of all things and everlasting life is a foundational doctrine of the Christian faith. Here he wants to remind and encourage his readers with the gospel. His goal is to remind them of their promised home. He wrote to “keep you wide awake with a reminder” (2 Pe 3:1, cf. also 1:13).

The title “new” is not frequently applied to Christ’s eternal kingdom; it only occurs four times. It is used twice by Isaiah¹⁹ and it is repeated in the closing of Revelation, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ...The one who was seated on the throne said to me, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’” (Re 21:1,5). The new creation is, however, alluded to in prophecy numerous times. Whenever we read about the promises of restoration and everlasting world-wide peace, it ultimately points us to a new creation.²⁰ This restoration was prophesied to come after this present world has perished.

Peter reveals that the new creation will be filled with new holy life ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη κατοικεῖ “in which righteousness dwells.” The new creation will have people and creatures, but it will not have any evil. Most importantly, it will have the Lord God, faithfully bound forever to his bride, the Church.

¹⁹ Watch this! I am about to create new heavens and a new earth. (Is 65:17) For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I am making will remain standing before me, declares the LORD, in the same way your offspring and your name will stand. (Is 66:22)

²⁰ E.g the restoration will be everlasting, not like this fading world: “In that day I will raise up the fallen shelter of David. I will repair the broken parts of its walls, and I will raise up its ruins. will rebuild it ... The mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will wave with grain. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they will rebuild the desolate cities and dwell in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant them in their soil, and they will never again be uprooted from the soil that I have given to them, says the LORD your God. (Am 9:11–15)

In that day I will make a covenant for the Israelites with the wild animals, with the birds of the sky and the things that creep on the ground. I will break the bow and the sword. I will abolish war from the land. I will allow the people to lie down safely. I will pledge you to myself in marriage forever. I will pledge you to myself in marriage— with righteousness, justice, mercy, and compassion (Ho 2:18–19).

This is the gift of God. He provides everlasting righteousness. וְצִדְקַתְּם מֵאֵתִי נְאֻם יְהוָה “Their righteousness is from me, declares the Lord” (Is 54:17). Death will not reign. Sin will no longer be found. “Just as sin reigned in death, so also grace would reign through righteousness, resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Ro 5:21).

Application

When we preach about the future coming of Christ and our everlasting home in the new creation, we aren’t preaching or proclaiming anything new. It isn’t new to those in our congregations who are mature in the faith. But the message of the new creation needs to be proclaimed and preached. It keeps us alert and encourages us while we wait in the darkness. Proclaim the new day! Regularly give your hearers the pleasure and excitement of hearing what we are looking forward to: the new creation where righteousness dwells!

Peter has presented a good listing of the summary of God’s working throughout history. This is an excellent chapter to review God’s plan for this world from its start to its glorious consummation.

3:2 The holy prophets recorded beforehand of what is to come.

3:2 Christ came once as recorded by the apostles.

3:3 We are living in “the last days”

3:4 There is a future promised “coming” of Christ.

3:4 There was a “beginning of creation”

3:5 The world was formed by God “long ago”

3:6 The “present world of today” is being held for judgment and will be destroyed.

3:7 There is a coming single “day of judgment”

3:9 God patiently now wants all to come to repentance

3:10 The “day of the Lord” will come suddenly

3:11-12 all things will be destroyed in his fire of judgment

3:13 We are looking forward to living in the new creation.

How can the new creation be taught in these end times? History must be taught in order to teach the future. This single chapter spans the entire history of this world. Pastors ought to regularly outline and overview God’s plan of salvation in their preaching and teaching. The handful of major events listed by Peter teach some grand biblical themes such as judgment, forbearance, destruction, and restoration. And they all lead us to look forward to the new creation.

We can also teach and preach about the new creation by looking at the messages of the prophets and apostles.

For me this is like the time of the waters of Noah. As I swore that the waters of Noah will never again cover the earth, so I am swearing that I will not be angry at you, and I will not rebuke you. For even if the mountains are removed, and the hills are overthrown, my mercy will not be removed from you, and my covenant of peace will not be overthrown, says the LORD, who is showing you mercy (Is 54:9-10).

2 Peter 3:14 Διό, ἀγαπητοί, ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ

Summary Therefore, loved ones, since you are looking forward to these things be eager to be found spotless and blameless at peace with him.

Notes

The causal use of participle Διό, ἀγαπητοί, ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε “*therefore...since* you are looking forward to these things” brings out the gospel motivation for Peter’s closing exhortations. Christians are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells. All this is a gift according to God’s promise. It moves God’s people to now live for him. The title, ἀγαπητοί, (found 5 times in this chapter) once again comes up in the context of exhortation. Their shared faith in God’s promises makes each of them “loved ones.”

There is a structural connection between 3:12 “look forward and hasten (προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας)” and 3:14 “look forward, make every effort (προσδοκῶντες σπουδάσατε)” The two related verbs σπεύδω and σπουδάζω contain the idea of hurrying. Here σπουδάσατε means “be eager, make every effort,” or “be diligent” (KJV). Peter urged this same effort at the start of his letter: “Therefore, brothers, be more eager (σπουδάσατε) to make your calling and election sure for yourselves” (2 Pe 1:10).

Peter’s readers might recall how ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι “spotless and blameless” were included in his description of Christ in his first letter. “The precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb (ἀμώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου)” (1 Pt 1:19). In this letter Peter uses it refer to the false teachers and mockers who are σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι “spots and blemishes” (2:13). Christians, eagerly looking forward to the last day, are empowered by the gospel to live new lives, and they are cleansed by Christ.

Many translations render αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι with an ethical dative or dative of opinion. They supply “in his sight.” (EHV, CSB, GNB). It is similar to the dative of advantage, but it is focused on what the benefactor perceives and thinks about it²¹. We are not truly spotless as we might appear in our sight, but we are spotless as far as we are connected to Christ and his righteousness. Depending on how one takes the textual critical question of εὐρίσκω in verse 10, the use of εὐρίσκω here could be seen as an intentional contrast between believers and unbelievers. One group is “found,” i.e. exposed in the judgment fire, another is “found,” i.e. declared holy because they are ἐν εἰρήνῃ “at peace” in Christ.

Application

The gospel works! When we grow weary in our sanctified living we need to be reminded of God’s “precious and great promises” (1:4). The promise of the new creation gives us divine power for life and godliness. “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness” (2 Pe 1:3). The gospel has power to save and to work in us what is good and pleasing to God.

Peter has provided us with encouragement and a response to the mockers. They are driven by their own desires, and so they grope about in the darkness with their foolish mocking. We are led by divine revelation. We must not forget what God has done. He has intervened in the past history of the world. He will intervene once more.

Until then we live under his incomparable patience and mercy. With a constant reminder of his Word, we live in spiritual sobriety, and with reverence and fear. By faith we live with eager longing to be found in him, at peace with God through Christ. Because of the promises of his victorious Son, we are looking forward to a new creation.

²¹ (Cf Wallace, 147)

God's timing will at times seem slow to us. That is because we are surrounded by the darkness and waiting for the morning to come. Like a nightwatchman, we may feel the night become long. But we wait in hope of what is to come. "I wait for the LORD. My soul waits, and in his word I have put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning" (Ps 130:5–6).

We are like those watchmen in the night waiting for the Lord to bring the new day and the dawning light of his glorious new kingdom. Be encouraged. Take heart. While we wait, we are not left without light in this dark world. "We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts" (2 Pe 1:19).

Be encouraged, loved ones in Christ, the day is coming soon!

Appendix

Resources to share encouragement for the end times.



*1 Peter Bible Study
& Sermon Series
Resources*

1 Peter Bible Study & Sermon Series



1 PETER

From CROSS to CROWN

1 Peter 1a	Prophesied Suffering and Glory
1 Peter 1b	Living Faith, Hope, and Love
1 Peter 1b-2a	From Cold, Dark Stone to Living
1 Peter 2b	Humbly Follow His Footsteps to the Cross
1 Peter 3a	Live in Harmony with Each Other
1 Peter 3b	Confess the Crucified and Risen Christ
1 Peter 4a	Serve While Suffering
1 Peter 4b	Rejoice While Suffering
1 Peter 5a	Shepherd from Cross to Crown
1 Peter 5b	Short Suffering; Eternal Glory

2 Peter Bible Study & Sermon Series



2 PETER

From Darkness to Dawn



*2 Peter Bible Study
and Sermon Series
Resources*

1. Pay Attention to the Light

- 1a His Divine Power Provides All We Need.
- 1b Don't Stumble in the Darkness.
- 1c Apostolic and Prophetic Truth

2. Don't Let the Darkness Deceive

- 2a Fabricated Lies of False Prophets
- 2b False Freedom of False Teachers

3. The Day Is Coming Soon

- 3a Promised Day of Judgement
- 3b Promised New Creation
- 3c Hold Firm to the Promises

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