

MAN'S UNBELIEF REGARDING CHRIST'S COMING

BIBLE TEXT : II Peter 3:1-18.

LESSON 456 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalm 1:1).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Peter 3:1-18

¹ This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in *both* which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

² That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

³ Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

⁴ And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation.

⁵ For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

⁶ Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

⁸ But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Coming of the Lord Denied by Scoffers

1. Peter's purpose was to stir up the minds of Christians by way of remembrance, II Peter 3:1, 2;

2 Peter 1:12

¹² Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know *them*, and be established in the present truth.

2. Scoffers, walking in their own lusts, say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" II Peter 3:3, 4;

Psalm 73:11

¹¹ And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

1 Corinthians 1:21

²¹ For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

3. They are willingly ignorant of the world's creation and destruction in the Flood by the Word of God, II Peter 3:5, 6; Hebrews 11:3.

II The Present World Now Kept in Store for Judgment

1. The earth that perished in the Flood by His Word, is to perish in a fire by the same Word, II Peter 3:7

2 Peter 2:5

⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

2. His promises are to stand, to whom a thousand years are as one day, II Peter 3:8, 9;

Psalm 90:4

⁴ For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

Isaiah 40:8

⁸ The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

3. The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night when the heavens and the earth are destroyed, II Peter 3:10

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Revelation 6:14

¹⁴ And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Revelation 16:15

¹⁵ Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

III The Necessity of Being Ready for the Day of the Lord

1. Believers, knowing that these things shall come to pass should walk in holiness, II Peter 3:11, 12

Matthew 24:35

³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

2. Looking forward to new heavens and a new earth should inspire diligence, II Peter 3:13, 14

which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

¹¹ Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

¹² Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

¹⁴ Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

¹⁵ And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

¹⁶ As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

¹⁷ Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

¹⁸ But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Isaiah 65:17

¹⁷ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Isaiah 66:22

²² For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

Revelation 21:1

¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

4. It is necessary to understand the things of God and grow in grace, II Peter 3:15-18;

2 Peter 1:10-11

¹⁰ Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

¹¹ For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

NOTES:

Stirring Up Their Minds

In Peter's second Epistle he contrasts the pure minds of believers with the corrupt minds portrayed in the last chapter. He was bringing to their remembrance the prophecies by the holy prophets in the Old Testament, to explain and apply them. To these he was adding the commandment of the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour.

Scoffers in the Last Days

The last days of which Peter spoke point to the closing time of this present age or dispensation. Scoffers, with their own pleasure being their only law, are unrestrained by God's Word and the prophecies contained therein. As the Apostle prophesied, there exists today a large class of people with "scientific" minds, falsely so called. In their intelligence and worldly wisdom, they have asked the very question that Peter attributed to them, "Where is the promise of His coming?" They rationalize that earthly pursuits and natural happenings have continued from the time of the fathers. Summer and winter come and go; families are born and die; and time continues on.

Men of presumptuous skepticism and lawless lust set nature and its so-called laws above the God of nature and His revelation. Sinful man knows that the Scripture teaches Christ's return; but his argument is that past continuity of time and events rule out any interruption in the future.

They believe that all things have existed as they were from the beginning, and this world will continue indefinitely, perhaps for millions of years, as it is today. And there is no room in this philosophy for the teachings and promises found in the Word of God. Such unbelief might well have been the sin of the people in the days of Noah. This attitude is foretold in this chapter.

Willingly Ignorant

Peter tells us they are willingly ignorant. There is none so blind as one who does not want to see. We who believe read in the Word, "Through faith [not science] we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3). "God said, Let there be light: and there was light." By His Word again that same world which God created perished in the Flood. It is possible that the people of Noah's day felt that since there never had been a

flood before, and things had continued the same in their day, Noah's warning to them, as he built the ark, was a matter for their scorn. In like manner the world that now is, is "reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (II Peter 3:7). It is true that this destruction by fire will not happen for more than a thousand years, because it occurs at the close of the Millennium.

God's Time Versus Man's

Peter tells us in the eighth verse that with God a thousand years are as a day and a day as a thousand years. The believer is enjoined to flee the ignorance of applying man's measurements to the things of God. This is the mistake the scoffers of the last days make. The Lord's time for the keeping of His appointments is not slow or running behind schedule. Man is too often late or slow. What appears to man to be delay is really longsuffering and mercy. He is not willing that any should perish, but wants all to come to repentance. He has spared a sinful world to give it opportunity to repent. No wonder the Psalmist said, "His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 106:1).

The Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord is coming as a surprise to the scoffers. They will be completely disarmed of their argument that since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The Day of the Lord is spoken of in **(Isaiah 2:10-22** ¹⁰ Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty. ¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. ¹² For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low:* ¹³ And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan,* ¹⁴ And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills *that are lifted up,* ¹⁵ And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, ¹⁶ And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. ¹⁷ And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. ¹⁸ And the idols he shall utterly abolish. ¹⁹ And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. ²⁰ In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made *each one* for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; ²¹ To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. ²² Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of? **Revelation 19:11-21** ¹¹ And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. ¹² His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head *were* many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. ¹³ And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And he hath on *his* vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. ¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all *men, both* free and bond, both small and great. ¹⁹ And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies,

gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. ²⁰ And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. ²¹ And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh). This day is not confined to a 24-hour day, but is indicated to be that time in which the Lord judges the world and its peoples. At God's appointed times these judgments will take place. At the culmination the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; being on fire they shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. This earth that has been so much polluted by sin shall pass away. (**Matthew 24:35** ³⁵ Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.)

Responsibility of Knowledge

With this knowledge of the things which are coming to pass, the Apostle asks the question, "What manner of persons ought ye to be" in all holy living with a continual sense of God's presence and trust in Him? With a constant watching and waiting for the coming of the day of God, we live not in fear, but in the hope of the Christian. We are not saying, "How can these things be?" Since the explosion of atomic blasts, this generation can very well see and understand how simply God could bring this word of prophecy to pass. The elements have already melted with fervent heat in the areas of this type of explosion. The fire and noise have been most terrifying to those in the vicinity, and the shock waves have laid everything low that was in its path.

New Heavens and a New Earth

As an encouragement to those who live godly, we have the promise of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (**Isaiah 65:17** ¹⁷ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. **Isaiah 66:22** ²² For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. **Revelation 21:1** ¹ And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.). Why should it seem strange or difficult for God to create new heavens and a new earth when He created the ones that now are? Revelation 21:5 tells us, "Behold, I make all things new." This should inspire every Christian to walk before the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life, and be diligent that he may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. This is not only that he might have part in that great Millennial Reign with Jesus, but also that he may be given an abundant entrance into that "New Jerusalem" at the end of the Millennium, and walk the streets of gold as the Apostle John of old.

Paul's Epistles Substantiated

The long-suffering of the Lord, is designed for the salvation of those yet to be gathered into the Church. However, the number of souls coming into the world so far exceeds the souls coming to Christ that a delay of any appreciable time would mean that many more souls will be lost than saved. Therefore, let us work, for the night is surely coming.

Peter here substantiates the words of the Apostle Paul as being divinely inspired by wisdom from God. He tells us that he is in complete agreement with Paul's writing on the subject of the coming of the Lord. Peter says that Paul's writings have some things hard to be understood. The prophets and writers of the

Scriptures saw events in space rather than time and sometimes looked over intervening occurrences between the objective points. This gives us foundation for the basic rule of Scriptural interpretation, which is the explaining of Scripture by Scripture; and we must take the whole and entire revelation of God's will and plan, to rightly divide the Word of Truth. Peter tells us that the unlearned or spiritually blind, and the unstable or changeable, wrest

-- literally distort out of shape -- the Scriptures which would bring about their salvation if obeyed. By their distortion they bring about their own destruction. This is a solemn warning. When he speaks of the other Scriptures that they treat in like manner, he is classing Paul's writings as already accepted New Testament Scripture in the church of these Hebrews.

Growth in Grace

To sum up the pointed meaning of this discourse on the danger of unbelief in regard to Christ's coming, Peter appeals to the believers with their knowledge of the things of God to beware lest they be led away by these reasonings of men (which he calls the error of the wicked) and they fall from their state of grace. This would be sinning against light.

On the contrary, he admonished them to grow or increase in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the opposite of apostatising. The knowledge of God is the opposite of unbelief. A minister of another day said that in old age, grace brings maturity, not decay; advance, not decline; perfection, not carelessness. We go from strength to strength. Without grace, there can be no saving knowledge. Man is inclined to glory in his own worldly wisdom, but Peter ascribes all glory to Christ, both now and forever.

QUESTIONS

1. What period is being referred to in the third verse?
2. What is the subject of the scoffing?
3. Of what fact do the scoffers seem to be in ignorance?
4. For what reason is the coming of the Lord delayed?
5. Name some of the happenings during the Day of the Lord.
6. What should be the manner of believers with the knowledge of the Day of the Lord?
7. What hope is set before the believer?
8. With what warning and exhortation does Peter close this Epistle?