

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of the Second Epistle of Peter – Part 12

I. Exposition of Chapter Three – Christ’s Return (continued).

A. Verse 7 – “But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

1. “...the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved...” – In II Corinthians 12:2, Paul speaks of being “...caught up to the third heaven.” If there is a third heaven, then there must be a first and second heaven. From this passage, it’s understood that the third heaven is referring to the abode of God. It’s usually understood that the first “heaven” is the air, or atmosphere around the earth. The second “heaven” is usually understood as the “starry heavens” or the universe. In the passage we’re studying, the “heavens and the earth” are going to be judged in order to be cleansed from ungodliness. This leaves us with the option of it referring to either the first or second heavens for there is no ungodliness in the heaven where God abides. In the Greek, the word “heavens” here means; “space above the earth, including the vault arching high over the earth from one horizon to another, as well as the sun, moon, and stars—‘sky.’¹ Scholars differ as to whether the “heavens” to be destroyed is referring to the atmosphere around the earth alone, or includes the entire universe being judged. (cf. Ephesians 2:2; 6:12). The word “preserved” means; “to reserve, keep in store,”²
2. “...by the same word...” – This speaks of the integrity and authority of God’s Word. Just as God commanded the original creation by His Word (verse 5), and just as God’s Word of judgment fell in Noah’s day and brought the flood (verse 6), so, despite what any “scoffers” might say (verses 3-4), God’s Word of judgment will be fulfilled again in the future.
3. “...are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”
 - a. The word “reserved” is the same word found in 2:4, 9, 17 and always in the context of judgment on the ungodly. The word means several things depending upon context, but here it probably means; “to store up, reserve, to keep in custody”³
 - b. “...for fire until the day of judgment...” – Some scholars suggest that the “fire” spoken of is not to be taken literally but metaphorically as a description of judgment. One of the rules of interpretation, however, is to take the Word of God literally unless it is obviously figurative or irrational. Here, there seems to be no reason whatsoever not to take this literally. Kenneth Gangel writes:

“Verses 7, 10, and 12 are the only places where the New Testament depicts the future destruction of the world by fire. In the past the world was destroyed in the Flood by God’s Word and by water; in the future it will be destroyed by the same Word and by fire. Having decided to judge the world (cf. 2:3–4, 9, 17), God is simply holding the earth on layaway. It is reserved (...“being stored up like a treasure”) for fire and kept (...“guarded” or “held”) for judgment. Isaiah (66:15–16) and Malachi (4:1) associated fire with the return of the Lord.”⁴

- c. “...and the perdition of ungodly men.” – The word “perdition” means; “destruction, state of being destroyed, eternal ruin”⁵ The word “destroyed” in this definition does not mean that the ungodly people will be annihilated, or cease to exist. Kenneth Wuest asserts; “Perdition’ is...“to be delivered up to eternal misery, to incur the loss of all things that make existence worth while.”⁶ “Ungodly” means; “destitute of reverential awe towards God, contemning (treat or regard with contempt) God, impious”⁷

B. Verse 8 – “But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” In verse 5, Peter states that the scoffers, who were mocking the idea of the second coming of the Lord, had willfully forgotten that God had intervened in the past. Now he addresses the believers and exhorts them to “...not forget this one thing...”. He then alludes to Psalm 90:4 which reads; “For a thousand years in Your sight *Are* like yesterday when it is past, *And like* a watch in the night.” Peter is basically saying

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 1.

² *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, William D. Mounce, Gen. ed. (Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, 2006.) 1170.

³ *Ibid.*, 1291.

⁴ Kenneth O. Gangel, “2 Peter,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 876.

⁵ Mounce, 1095.

⁶ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 69.

⁷ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 79.

that God is not bound by time like humanity is. The scoffers may say so much time has gone by and He hasn't come yet but Peter reminds the believers that, from God's perspective, it was like yesterday when He made the promise of His coming. Dr. Bob Utley adds:

"It asserts the truth that time is not a factor with an eternal God. Only His creatures experience past, present, and future. We are time-bound, time-conscious. Believers must hold on to the truth that what God promises, God will do (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:24, 26, 56). We trust in His character, His promises, His word, and His Son!"⁸

C. Verse 9 – "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

1. **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness..."** – The word "slack" means; **to be slow, to delay**⁹. In this context, Peter is stating that **"...the promise of His coming..." (verse 4)** is not delayed, nor are any of His promises. The word **"count"** means; **"to hold a view or have an opinion"**¹⁰ In other words, the Lord is not delayed like some people think.
2. **"...but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."** The word **"longsuffering"** means; **"to be patient, to remain patient, to wait patiently"**¹¹ Peter is saying that the Lord is waiting patiently because He wants people to have an opportunity to repent so they will not perish. This is why He hasn't come back yet. The word **"perish"** is the same word found in **verse 6 ("perished")** and is related to the word **"perdition"** in **verse 7** and means; **"to destroy or to cause the destruction of persons... 'to ruin'"**¹² The word **"repentance"** means; **"to change one's way of life as the result of a complete change of thought and attitude with regard to sin and righteousness"**¹³

D. Verse 10 – "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."

1. **"...the day of the Lord..."** - , This phrase can refer to the period of time which begins with the second coming of Christ on through the Millennium. This particular use, however, is referring to the end of the Millennium period because that's when the heavens and earth are destroyed (**cf. Revelation 21:1**).
2. **"...as a thief in the night..."** – This simile is used in other places in the New Testament to denote something happening by surprise and unexpected (**cf. Matthew 24:42-44**). **I Thessalonians 5:1-4** states that the believer should not be surprised. Kenneth Gangel writes concerning this:

"In the catastrophic conflagration at the end of the Millennium, the heavens (the earth's atmosphere and the starry sky, not God's abode) will disappear with a roar, which in some way will involve fire (2 Peter 3:7, 12). The elements (*stoicheia*, either stars or material elements with which the universe is made) will be destroyed by fire (and will melt, v. 12), and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (*eurethēsetai*)."¹⁴

E. Verse 11 – "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,"

1. **"...since all these things will be dissolved..."** – The word **"dissolved"** is the same Greek word found in **verse 10**, translated **"melt"**. Robert C. Cunningham writes:

"Dissolved is *luomenon* (loosen, disintegrate, melt). It is the New Testament word that best describes atomic disintegration.... Since we have become familiar with nuclear power, we know something of 'meltdoens,' and we can imagine what will take place when all the atoms are smashed. Our knowledge of atomic explosions gives us some idea of the 'great noise' (verse 10) which will result from the breakup of all matter."¹⁵

2. **"...what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,"** – Peter is admonishing believers here that, seeing judgment day is coming, we need to watch our lives and live **"...in holy conduct and godliness"**.

"Since all these things are thus in the process of being dissolved, what kind of person ought [each of] you to be [in the meanwhile] in consecrated and holy behavior and devout and godly qualities," - II Peter 3:11 – Amplified Bible

⁸ Robert James Dr. Utley, *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, vol. Volume 2, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 300.

⁹ Mounce, 1109.

¹⁰ Louw and Nida, 364.

¹¹ Ibid., 306.

¹² Ibid., 231.

¹³ Ibid., 509.

¹⁴ Gangel, "2 Peter," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, 877.

¹⁵ *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 1135.