

"Beloved"

Introduction. This final chapter in 2 Peter has provided some of the most well-known passages about the coming judgment of the Lord. This chapter reveals Peter as one who loves his readers deeply. He uses the word "beloved" four times and each time gives a solemn admonition. We will consider these admonitions in this lesson.

I. ***Beloved, Be Mindful (3:1-7)***

- A. The stated purpose in vs. 1 is almost identical with 1:13. The "words which were spoken before" have reference to the judgment of the Lord, and Peter places the words of the prophets and the commands of the apostles on equal ground.
- B. The "scoffers," or the ones who mock, would walk after their own lusts, similar to the description of the false teachers in the previous chapter. They did not want the day of the Lord to come.
 - 1. Notice that they were not asking where is the promise, they are asking where is its reality.
 - 2. Mocking the faith of Christians, they support their own position by stating a uniformitarianism that rules out any divine intervention in history.
- C. However, they deliberately forget not only the flood but also God's prior activity in creating the world.
 - 1. It seems unlikely that Peter is seeking to affirm that water was the basic material of creation. He does not use the verb "create" but says that the earth was "standing out of the water and in the water."
 - a) "In the water" more precisely means "through" or "by the water." The mass called "water" was the grand material out of which the earth was formed.
 - b) Everything arose out of that chaotic mass; through that, or by means of that, all things were formed.
 - 2. In the past, God purged the world by water (Genesis 7:10-12). In the future, God will destroy the heavens and the earth by fire.
 - a) In Genesis 1:6-10, the sky separates the waters from the waters by the word of God, and the land appears out of the water by the same word.
 - b) In vs. 6, the phrase "overflowed with water" probably refers to both water and the word as the agents used by God for destroying the former world, just as word and fire will be the destructive agents in the future (vs. 7).
- D. The period between the flood and the fire is the period of God's longsuffering, discussed more extensively in vs. 9.

II. ***Beloved, Be Not Ignorant (3:8-10)***

- A. The admonition "be not ignorant" is addressed to Christians and uses the same word that is used in vs. 5 of the false teachers' deliberate forgetfulness. The mockers argued that God was slow to keep His promise, and evidently some Christians were influenced by this thinking.
- B. People view history in terms of days and years, but to God, time is always present tense. A thousand years are but a day to Him (Psalm 90:4). God can count time, but to Him it does not matter because when God makes a promise, it will come to pass.
- C. God's delay ("slowness" or "tardiness") is gracious; it is not caused by inability or indifference. His goal is to be patient with us (Romans 2:4; 9:22).
 - 1. The condition of salvation, as mentioned here, is repentance (cf. Luke 13:3, 5); however, Peter does not give this as the sole condition of salvation. Without repentance, no one would have any desire to confess Jesus or to be baptized.
 - 2. The fact that God wants all to repent destroys the tenet of Calvinism which states that God is only interested in the elect.
 - a) This doctrine teaches that, based solely on God's choice, only a few will be saved. Steele and Thomas, in *The Five Points Of Calvinism*, write, "The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any) -- but He did neither. Instead He chose to save some and to exclude others. His eternal choice of particular sinners unto salvation was not based upon any foreseen act or response on the part of those selected, but was based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will. Thus election was not determined by, or conditioned upon, anything that men would do, but resulted entirely from God's self-determined purpose."
 - b) Conversely, all others are excluded from salvation. Steel and Thomas say, "Those who were not chosen to salvation were passed by and left to their own evil desires and choices. It is not within the creature's jurisdiction to call into question the justice of the Creator for not choosing everyone to salvation. It is enough to know that the Judge of the earth has done right. It should, however, be kept in mind that if God had not graciously chosen a people for Himself and sovereignly determined to pro-

vide salvation for them and apply it to them, none would be saved. The fact that He did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners -- a position which the Bible utterly rejects."

- D. Jesus taught that His coming would be unexpected as the coming of a thief (Matthew 24:42-44). Paul taught the same (1 Thessalonians 5:2). His coming the second time will be for salvation, not to establish an earthly kingdom (Hebrews 9:28).
- E. The word for "great noise" (*hroizedon*) is onomatopoeic which means that its pronunciation suggests its meaning. It means "a whizzing sound of rapid motion through the air like the flight of a bird, thunder, or fierce flame." "Elements" is elsewhere translated "principles" (Hebrews 5:12) and denotes the minute parts or portions of which anything is composed. It represents the component parts of the material world. "Fervent heat" means a violent, consuming heat.

III. ***Beloved, Be Diligent (3:11-14)***

- A. Peter now makes the impending destruction of the universe the ground for a personal challenge to his readers. This fact ought to exert a deep and abiding influence on us, to induce us to lead holy lives. "Holiness" entails separation from evil and dedication to God, an external trait. "Godliness" relates to piety and worship, an internal attitude.
- B. Another part of godly living is an expectation and eager desire of future judgment.
 - 1. Some believe that vs. 12 teaches that the godly lives of Christians actually makes the end of the world come more quickly.
 - 2. However, "hasting" means "to urge on" or to await something with eager desire. The Christian does not dread the judgment. He looks forward to it as the final reward.
- C. "New" is seen from the aspect of quality, not time. The new heavens and new earth will be free from the curse of sin and will be beautiful beyond the wildest expectations of men (cf. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22). There is nothing impure in heaven (Revelation 21:1, 8, 27).
- D. "New heavens and a new earth" does not mean, as suggested by some, that this present earth will be renovated by fire and ultimately become our heaven. Consider some quotes from Jehovah's Witnesses publications:
 - 1. "It is so plain that the Bible hell is the tomb, the grave, that even an honest little child can understand it, but not the religious theologians" (*Let God Be True*).

2. "It means the death from which there is no resurrection. They will be burned up root and branch, as completely gone forever as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah" (*The Watchtower*).
3. "When completed, it is to be 144,000 members strong under the Head Jesus Christ; and on the heavenly Mount Zion, where he has been laid as the tested and sure foundation, they will stand up in power with him ... But only 144,000 persons will be a part of the new heavens with Jesus Christ" (*New Heavens And A New Earth*).
4. Here are the facts regarding this matter:
 - a) This present earth will pass away (Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 1:11-12). Our eternal abiding place is heaven (1 Peter 1:4). There is nothing permanent upon this earth.
 - b) Just as our present environment is called heaven and earth (we draw our sustenance from the air and land), even so, our future state of being is figuratively called a "new heavens and a new earth." This is an allusion to heaven itself.
 - c) This can be demonstrated logically. In logic there is a maxim which states that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other. If $A = B$ and $B = C$, then it follows that $A = C$.
 - d) If we are promised "heaven" as our final dwelling place, and yet we are also promised a "new heavens and a new earth," it necessarily follows that the new heavens and earth represents the same state as heaven.
- E. Peter reminds the saints that they are the loved ones of God. "Be diligent" speaks of an intense effort and is also used in 2 Timothy 2:15, where it is translated "study" in the King James Version (cf. Ephesians 4:3; Hebrews 4:11; 2 Peter 1:10). In Revelation 2:16, Christ warns the church at Pergamos to repent or He will fight them with the sword of His mouth. Those who are at "peace" with Him have put sin out of their lives.

IV. **Beloved, Beware (3:15-18)**

- A. Peter again stresses that the purpose of the Lord's "longsuffering" is designed for our salvation. The delay actually represents God's mercy and desire of our salvation.
- B. The noun form of "wrest" refers to an instrument of torture. The verb means "to torture, put to the rack, to twist or dislocate the limbs on the rack." It is a uniquely graphic word used to describe the perversion of scripture.
- C. "Beware" is a military term. "Error" means "a wandering or straying about." The "wicked" man breaks through the restraints of law and gratifies his own lusts. Peter himself knew about falling away, and

wanted to spare his beloved readers from the same transgression (Luke 22:32).

- D. The theme of 1 Peter was grace; the theme of 2 Peter is knowledge. Peter sums up both books by admonishing us to grow in grace and in knowledge.
 - 1. The dominant motivation for writing this letter was Peter's love and concern for the flock (cf. the repeated use of "beloved").
 - 2. Since he has told Christians beforehand about the false teachers, they are able to be on guard. If Christians do not keep moving forward, they will fall back. Making the attainment of heaven should be the highest object of our lives.
- E. The closing ascription of praise is notable for its direct ascription of "glory" to Christ. For a Jew who has learned the great words in Isaiah 42:8, this doxology is a clear confession of Christ (cf. John 5:23). This supreme honor belongs to Jesus Christ today ("now") and "forever." So Peter finally points his readers to "the day of the Lord" when Christ will be manifested in all His glory.

Conclusion. Are you prepared to meet your Lord? There is indeed a great day coming, but will you be ready? Will you watch and prepare? If you would like to obey or turn back to the Lord today, we will help you and pray for you.