**The Fathers Fell Asleep**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Peter 3:1-9**

**Wednesday Evening**

**July 19, 2023**

**2 Peter 3:1-9**

1 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), 2 that you 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 Savior,

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to 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 creation." 5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. 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. 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.

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 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder),**

Saints, Peter’s purpose was to remind the believers that their lives ought to be characterized by wholesome thinking (meaning sincerity or purity of understanding).

Plato had used this phrase to refer to pure reason uncontaminated by the senses.

The thinking and intentions of God’s people must be able to stand up under scrutiny and not be led astray by immoral desires.

**Philippians 4:8-9**

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

**1 Corinthians 15:58**

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”

**James 3:17**

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy”

**2 that you 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 Savior,**

Saints, the way to maintain “wholesome thinking” is to remember and understand Scripture.

The holy prophets had written about the coming of the Messiah, and what he would command through his apostles. Most likely this refers to the law as upheld by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount and propagated by the apostles.

The Holy Spirit unified the prophets and apostles in an unchanging message of hope and truth. The prophets had written of the Messiah, who would come to bring judgment and restore the Kingdom; those words had come to pass.

**Romans 12:9-19**

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Saints, the apostles had spoken and written that Jesus the Messiah would return to bring judgment. Thus believers should live expectantly, knowing that those words will also come to pass.

**3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,**

Saints, we, along with the first-century believers, ought to be prepared for anything because we have been warned what to watch for and how to live.

Peter wrote that in the last days there will be scoffers. The “last days” began with Christ’s resurrection and will continue until his return, when he will set up his Kingdom and judge all humanity.

Jesus and the apostles warned that during that interim, including the time period we live in, scoffers will laugh at the truth (see 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-9).

**1 Timothy 4:1-2**

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron…

**2 Timothy 3:1-9**

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

Saints, once again, Peter was referring to false teachers who deny Jesus Christ and thereby deny his second coming. These false teachers will laugh at the truth of God’s word and instead do every evil thing they desire.

Peter called the believers to remember the Scriptures and to live to please God; but the false teachers will scoff at the Scriptures and will live to please themselves and their sinful desires.

Ironically, the very presence of these men who scoffed at prophecy was itself fulfillment of prophecy.

**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 creation."**

Saints, the false teachers’ scoffing focused on Christ’s second coming. Jesus had promised that he would come back, but many years had passed and nothing had happened.

**Mark 13:24-27**

24 "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in heaven will be shaken. 26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. 27 And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

Saints, the scoffers based their argument on the fact that everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created.

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Saints, many first-century Christians believed that Jesus would come in their lifetime. When Christians began to die without experiencing the Lord’s return, some began to doubt.

These were prime targets for the false teachers, who pointed out that perhaps it was all a lie and Christ was never going to return.

The false teachers argued that ever since creation, the world has continued in a natural order, a system of cause-and-effect. They did not believe that God would intervene or allow anything out of the ordinary (such as miracles) to occur.

Therefore, they scoffed at teachings about a Second Coming and the end of the world.

**5 For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, 6 by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.**

Saints, what these scoffers were forgetting in their argument (that the world had remained unchanged since creation) was that God made the heavens.

The Creation disproves their “all things continue” argument because the creation of the earth was an imposed change on the formless void.

**Genesis 1:1-2**

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Saints, the very reason the world was continuing on in a stable, predictable pattern was because God, in his grace, had created it that way.

**Colossians 1:16-18**

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

However, this stability should not be taken for granted. The false teachers deliberately forgot that God also had destroyed the evil world with a mighty flood.

**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.**

Saints, Saints, as God destroyed the earth before, he has also commanded that the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment. In Noah’s day the earth was judged by water; at the Second Coming it will be judged by fire (see Isaiah 66:15-16; Malachi 4:1; Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15).

**Isaiah 66:15-16**

15 For behold, the LORD will come with fire And with His chariots, like a whirlwind, To render His anger with fury, And His rebuke with flames of fire. 16 For by fire and by His sword The LORD will judge all flesh; And the slain of the LORD shall be many.

**Malachi 4:1-3**

1 "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. 3 You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this," Says the LORD of hosts.

**Revelation 19:20-21**

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

**Revelation 20:10-15**

10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Saints, judgment has already been decided. Ungodly people will perish; it is only a matter of God’s timing.

Scholars have debated whether Peter was referring to a literal fiery destruction of the entire universe with new heavens and earth to follow, or to “fire of judgment.”

Second Peter is the only New Testament book that says the world will actually be destroyed by fire.

The passages cited above refer primarily to the fire of God’s judgment. If taken that way, the fire purifies the earth, burns up the Lord’s enemies and the futile works of humanity, and makes the earth new for Christ’s eternal reign.

Peter’s point was that destruction would come, and the godless (those who have not believed) will not escape.

**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.**

Saints, Peter had made his point that Christ would certainly return and bring judgment, but the question still remained, “Why was the Lord delaying so long?”

Peter offered two reasons in 3:8-9. First of all, the Lord does not count time as people do. He is above and outside of the sphere of time. God sees all of eternity past and eternity future.

Indeed, to him a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day.

**Psalm 90:4**

“For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night”

Saints, God may have seemed slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered. But God is not slow; he simply doesn’t operate according to our timetable.

**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.**

Saints, the second reason for the Lord being slow about his promise to return was his patience.

He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent.

He wants as many people as will to come to faith in him. God is not “slow” at all; rather, according to his timetable, he is being exceedingly patient, giving people time to turn to him.

Love is the reason that he delays the destruction of the world. Some have attempted to make this verse mean that ultimately everyone will be saved.

But nowhere does Scripture teach universal salvation. This verse means that God, in his great compassion, does not desire that anyone should “perish” (referring to eternal destruction).

He wants every person to turn to him and trust him. God is loving, but he also executes perfect justice.

His perfect love causes him to be merciful to those who recognize their sin and turn back to him, but he cannot ignore those who willfully sin.

Wicked people die both physically and spiritually. God takes no joy in their deaths; he would prefer that they turn to him and have eternal life.

However, the promise of judgment and destruction show that God knows that many will not choose to follow him.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**