

### Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

The apostle shows his design in writing this and the preceding epistle, 2 Peter 3:1, 2 Peter 3:2. Describes the nature of the heresies which should take place in the last times, 2 Peter 3:3-8. A thousand years with the Lord are but as a day, 2 Peter 3:9. He will come and judge the world as he has promised, and the heavens and the earth shall be burnt up, 2 Peter 3:10. How those should live who expect these things, 2 Peter 3:11, 2 Peter 3:12. Of the new heavens and the new earth, and the necessity of being prepared for this great change, 2 Peter 3:13, 2 Peter 3:14. Concerning some difficult things in St. Paul's epistles, 2 Peter 3:15, 2 Peter 3:16. We must watch against the error of the wicked, grow in grace, and give all glory to God, 2 Peter 3:17, 2 Peter 3:18.

### Verse 1

**This second epistle - In order to guard them against the seductions of false teachers, he calls to their remembrance the doctrine of the ancient prophets, and the commands or instructions of the apostles, all founded on the same basis.**

He possibly refers to the prophecies of Enoch, as mentioned by Jude, Judges 1:14, Judges 1:15; of David, Psalm 1:1, etc.; and of Daniel, Daniel 12:2, relative to the coming of our Lord to judgment: and he brings in the instructions of the apostles of Christ, by which they were directed how to prepare to meet their God.

### Verse 3

Knowing this first - Considering this in an especial manner, that those prophets predicted the coming of false teachers: and their being now in the Church proved how clearly they were known to God, and showed the Christians at Pontus the necessity of having no intercourse or connection with them.

**There shall come - scoffers - Persons who shall endeavor to turn all religion into ridicule, as this is the most likely way to depreciate truth in the sight of the giddy multitude. The scoffers, having no solid argument to produce against revelation, endeavor to make a scaramouch of some parts; and then affect to laugh at it, and get superficial thinkers to laugh with them.**

**Walking after their own lusts - Here is the true source of all infidelity. The Gospel of Jesus is pure and holy, and requires a holy heart and holy life. They wish to follow their own lusts, and consequently cannot brook the restraints of the Gospel: therefore they labor to prove that it is not true, that they may get rid of its injunctions, and at last succeed in persuading themselves that it is a forgery; and then throw the reins on the neck of their evil propensities. Thus their opposition to revealed truth began and ended in their own lusts.**

There is a remarkable addition here in almost every MS. and version of note: There shall come in the last days, In Mockery,  $\text{Î}\mu\text{Î}\frac{1}{2}\text{Î}\mu\text{Î}\frac{1}{4}\text{Î}\epsilon\text{Î}\pm\text{Î}\text{Î}\text{Î}\frac{1}{4}\text{Î}\zeta\text{Î}\frac{1}{2}\text{â}\zeta\text{f}$ , scoffers walking after their own lusts. This is the reading of ABC, eleven others, both the Syriac, all the Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopic, Vulgate, and several of the fathers. They come in mockery; this is their spirit and temper; they have no desire to find out truth; they take up the Bible merely with the design of turning it into ridicule. This reading Griesbach has received into the text.

**The last days - Probably refer to the conclusion of the Jewish polity, which was then at hand.**

### Verse 4

Where is the promise of his coming? - Perhaps the false teachers here referred to were such as believed in the eternity of the world: the prophets and the apostles had foretold its destruction, and they took it for granted, if this were true, that the terrestrial machine would have begun long ago to have shown some symptoms of decay; but they found that since the patriarchs died all things remained as they were from the foundation of the world; that is, men were propagated by natural generation, one was born and another died, and the course of nature continued regular in the seasons, succession of day and night, generation and corruption of animals and vegetables, etc.; for they did not consider the power of the Almighty, by which the whole can be annihilated in a moment, as well as created. As, therefore, they saw none of these changes, they presumed that there would be none, and they intimated that there never had been any. The apostle combats this notion in the following verse.

### Verse 5

**For this they willingly are ignorant of - They shut their eyes against the light, and refuse all evidence; what does not answer their purpose they will not know. And the apostle refers to a fact that militates against their hypothesis, with which they refused to acquaint themselves; and their ignorance he attributes to their unwillingness to learn the true state of the case.**

**By the word of God the heavens were of old - I shall set down the Greek text of this extremely difficult clause:**



thousand years are but a certain indefinite point, or rather the smallest part of a point. The words of the apostle seem to be a quotation from Psalm 90:4.

#### Verse 9

The Lord is not slack - They probably in their mocking said, "Either God had made no such promise to judge the world, destroy the earth, and send ungodly men to perdition; or if he had, he had forgotten to fulfill it, or had not convenient time or leisure." To some such mocking the apostle seems to refer: and he immediately shows the reason why deserved punishment is not inflicted on a guilty world.

But is long-suffering - It is not slackness, remissness, nor want of due displacence at sin, that induced God to prolong the respite of ungodly men; but his long-suffering, his unwillingness that any should perish: and therefore he spared them, that they might have additional offers of grace, and be led to repentance - to deplore their sins, implore God's mercy, and find redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

As God is not willing that any should perish, and as he is willing that all should come to repentance, consequently he has never devised nor decreed the damnation of any man, nor has he rendered it impossible for any soul to be saved, either by necessitating him to do evil, that he might die for it, or refusing him the means of recovery, without which he could not be saved.

#### Verse 10

The day of the Lord will come - See Matthew 24:43, to which the apostle seems to allude.

The heavens shall pass away with a great noise - As the heavens mean here, and in the passages above, the whole atmosphere, in which all the terrestrial vapours are lodged; and as water itself is composed of two gases, eighty-five parts in weight of oxygen, and fifteen of hydrogen, or two parts in volume of the latter, and one of the former; (for if these quantities be put together, and several electric sparks passed through them, a chemical union takes place, and water is the product; and, vice versa, if the galvanic spark be made to pass through water, a portion of the fluid is immediately decomposed into its two constituent gases, oxygen and hydrogen); and as the electric or ethereal fire is that which, in all likelihood, God will use in the general conflagration; the noise occasioned by the application of this fire to such an immense congeries of aqueous particles as float in the atmosphere, must be terrible in the extreme. Put a drop of water on an anvil, place over it a piece of iron red hot, strike the iron with a hammer on the part above the drop of water, and the report will be as loud as a musket; when, then, the whole strength of those opposite agents is brought together into a state of conflict, the noise, the thunderings, the innumerable explosions, (till every particle of water on the earth and in the atmosphere is, by the action of the fire, reduced into its component gaseous parts), will be frequent, loud, confounding, and terrific, beyond every comprehension but that of God himself.

The elements shall melt with fervent heat - When the fire has conquered and decomposed the water, the elements, *ἡ ἕρση τοῦ ὕδατος*, the hydrogen and oxygen airs or gases, (the former of which is most highly inflammable, and the latter an eminent supporter of all combustion), will occupy distinct regions of the atmosphere, the hydrogen by its very great levity ascending to the top, while the oxygen from its superior specific gravity will keep upon or near the surface of the earth; and thus, if different substances be once ignited, the fire, which is supported in this case, not only by the oxygen which is one of the constituents of atmospheric air, but also by a great additional quantity of oxygen obtained from the decomposition of all aqueous vapours, will rapidly seize on all other substances, on all terrestrial particles, and the whole frame of nature will be necessarily torn in pieces, and thus the earth and its works be burned up.

#### Verse 11

All these things shall be dissolved - They will all be separated, all decomposed; but none of them destroyed. And as they are the original matter out of which God formed the terraqueous globe, consequently they may enter again into the composition of a new system; and therefore the apostle says, 2 Peter 3:13: we look for new heavens and a new earth - the others being decomposed, a new system is to be formed out of their materials. There is a wonderful philosophic propriety in the words of the apostle in describing this most awful event.

What manner of persons ought ye to be - Some put the note of interrogation at the end of this clause, and join the remaining part with the 12th verse, thus: Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be? By holy conversation and godliness, expecting and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, etc. Only those who walk in holiness, who live a godly and useful life, can contemplate this most awful time with joy.

The word *ἵνα ἵμεν*, which we translate hasting unto, should be tendered earnestly desiring, or wishing for; which is a frequent meaning of the word in the best Greek writers.

## Verse 12

The heavens being on fire - See on 2 Peter 3:10. (note). It was an ancient opinion among the heathens that the earth should be burnt up with fire; so Ovid, *Met.*, lib. i. v. 256.

Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur, adfore tempus,  
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaue regia coeli  
Ardeat; et mundi moles operosa laboret.

Remembering in the fates a time when fire  
Should to the battlements of heaven aspire,  
And all his blazing world above should burn,  
And all the inferior globe to cinders turn. •  
Dryden.

Minucius Felix tells us, xxxiv. 2, that it was a common opinion of the Stoics that, the moisture of the earth being consumed, the whole world would catch fire. The Epicureans held the same sentiment; and indeed it appears in various authors, which proves that a tradition of this kind has pretty generally prevailed in the world. But it is remarkable that none have fancied that it will be destroyed by water. The tradition, founded on the declaration of God, was against this; therefore it was not received.

## Verse 13

We, according to his promise, look for new heavens - The promise to which it is supposed the apostle alludes, is found Isaiah 65:17: Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind; and Isaiah 66:22: For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed, etc. Now, although these may be interpreted of the glory of the Gospel dispensation, yet, if St. Peter refer to them, they must have a more extended meaning.

It does appear, from these promises, that the apostle says here, and what is said Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:14, Revelation 22:15, that the present earth, though destined to be burned up, will not be destroyed, but be renewed and refined, purged from all moral and natural imperfection, and made the endless abode of blessed spirits. But this state is certainly to be expected after the day of judgment; for on this the apostle is very express, who says the conflagration and renovation are to take place at the judgment of the great day; see 2 Peter 3:7, 2 Peter 3:8, 2 Peter 3:10, 2 Peter 3:12. That such an event may take place is very possible; and, from the terms used by St. Peter, is very probable. And, indeed, it is more reasonable and philosophical to conclude that the earth shall be refined and restored, than finally destroyed. But this has nothing to do with what some call the millennium state; as this shall take place when time, with the present state and order of things, shall be no more.

## Verse 14

Seeing that ye look for such things - As ye profess that such a state of things shall take place, and have the expectation of enjoying the blessedness of it, be diligent in the use of every means and influence of grace, that ye may be found of him - the Lord Jesus, the Judge of quick and dead, without spot - any contagion of sin in your souls, and blameless - being not only holy and innocent, but useful in your lives.

## Verse 15

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord - Conclude that God's long-suffering with the world is a proof that he designs men to be saved; even as our beloved brother Paul. • This epistle being written to those to whom the first epistle was sent, the persons to whom the Apostle Paul wrote concerning the long-suffering of God were the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Accordingly, we know he wrote to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 2:3-5), to the Colossians, (Colossians 1:21), and to Timothy, (1 Timothy 2:3, 1 Timothy 2:4), things which imply that God's bearing with sinners is intended for their salvation. The persons to whom Peter's epistles were sent were, for the most part, Paul's converts. • Macknight.

According to the wisdom given unto him - That is, according to the measure of the Divine inspiration, by which he was qualified for the Divine work, and by which he was so capable of entering into the deep things of God. It is worthy of remark that Paul's epistles are ranked among the Scriptures; a term applied to those writings which are divinely inspired, and to those only.

## Verse 16

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things - Paul, in all his epistles, says Dr. Macknight, has spoken of the things written by Peter in this letter. For example, he has spoken of Christ's coming to judgment; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Titus 2:13. And of the resurrection of the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:22; Philemon 3:20, Philemon 3:21. And of the burning of the earth; 2





