

A Hopeful People

Key Verse: *"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."*
—II Peter 3:9

Selected Scripture:
II Peter 3

The prophetic nature of the chapter is underscored by Peter's reference to the "last days" which precede the establishment of the millennial kingdom. At that time, "scoffers" would deny evidences of the Lord's return with an attitude that showed disdain for scriptural revelation. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 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. 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: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."—vss. 3-6

IN THIS FINAL EXHORTA-
tion from Peter, he admonishes believers to recall various truths they had been given as an aid to their own steadfastness. He reminds his hearers that the source of the doctrine they had received came from the writings of the inspired Old Testament prophets, as well as the instruction from the apostles, which they had received from Jesus Christ.—II Pet. 3:1,2

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In verse 4, the word ‘coming’ translated from the Greek *parousia* should be rendered “presence” as noted in *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Rotherham and *Young’s Literal English Translation*. Thus, the scoffing referred to in verse 4 occurs during a period when some believers assert that Christ would be present, whereas others would deny such a claim.

This chapter is also highly symbolic since it refers to the heavens and the earth being reserved for fire until the day of judgment. (vs. 7) Unless the Bible contradicts itself (in which case we could have no faith that it is actually the Word of God), it would be difficult to think of this planet being destroyed by fire. “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.”—Eccles. 1:4

Our Key Verse contains an element of hope despite the ominous tone conveyed in this chapter. God is desirous of providing an opportunity for life for all who desire to learn of him and his plan of salvation.

After describing the need for removing the evil conditions that presently afflict mankind, a glorious outcome is promised. “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”—II Pet. 3:10-13

During his earthly ministry, Jesus frequently spoke in parables which he explained to his disciples, but the other hearers did not understand what he meant. (Matt. 13:15) He then told his followers how privileged they were to understand his sayings. “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.”—vs. 16

How blessed are we to understand about the wonderful tomorrow that God has in store for all the human family after this present reign of sin and death comes to an end. Let us be ever mindful of God’s glorious plan, and heed Peter’s words, “Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”—II Pet. 3:14 ■