

2nd Sunday of Advent
December 4, 2011
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The message of II Peter, chapter 3, is the message of the Advent (the COMING of Christ Jesus), and Christ's Second Coming will be associated with the **fiery end** of the world and everything that is upon it.

In this letter Peter seeks to bring to the minds of the people the importance of understanding **and of remembering** that THIS END **is coming** and he does not want them to IGNORE this fact!!!

Peter urges them to live holy and godly lives and to have an attitude of **diligent obedience to the WORD of God.**

They are to **BEWARE** lest they let the ERROR of those who **do not obey** God's WORD sweep them away with every changing wind that blows through societies and that they then lose the STABILITY they have in God's WORD.

Growing in GRACE and KNOWLEDGE of Christ Jesus is the only antidote to the all persuasive errors that pull people away from True Discipleship with Christ Jesus. A growing and maturing faith is to be central in people's lives; it is what will keep them from the corrosive power of false beliefs.

The worldly-minded, secular scoffers do not take spirituality seriously; they have NO interest in the Second Advent of Christ. And any thoughts associated with God are ridiculed as an absurdity. God's Coming Judgment Day is viewed as sheer fiction, for generations and centuries have come and gone and still there is no sign of Christ's Second Coming.

The scoffer's attitude parallels that of the beginning of Ecclesiastes:

*Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,
vanity of vanities! All is vanity.
What does man gain by all the toil
at which he toils under the sun?
A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.*

And on the beginning of Ecclesiastes goes stating the same thought expressed by the scoffers in II Peter, chapter 3, verse 4:

Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning...

The scoffers say nothing has changed since Christ Jesus died and nothing will change, there will be NO fulfillment of what Christians believe concerning a Second Coming.

Against this thought Peter presents three strong arguments.

The first argument is the argument of HISTORY. Have things always continued on as usual? Have things always conformed to an IRON CLAD LAW OF UNIFORMITY? **What about the flood?** God has broken into history in the past and brought about change and God will do it again at the sound of the trumpet on the LAST DAY!!!

The second argument is the argument of CONTRAST. Peter says we must never confuse TIME with ETERNITY!

Peter says we must never confuse the time of mankind with the **Time of God. God's Time is limitless**; mankind's understanding of time is limited. The real things of God can not be measured by a human time-table for God will fulfill His purposes regardless of the passage of time marked by humanity.

The third argument is the argument of OPPORTUNITY. Peter looks upon the delay in the Second Advent (in the Second Coming of Christ Jesus) as evidence of God's **long-suffering over us** as HIS people.

This long delay is evidence of God's wishing for all people to be saved.

This long delay is evidence of God giving us **more time** to proclaim the MESSAGE of SALVATION to all people in the world so that all people will have an opportunity to know the truth, repent of their sins, and thus be saved before God's corrective power makes itself felt as we read in verse ten.

But the day of the LORD will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Up until the recent past I am sure that a lot of people questioned the reality of this image. But the atomic bomb has proven, at least on a small scale, that a great noise can be made and that the resulting fire-storm can dissolve elements completely. And through the study of astronomy we now know that at some point in the far future our sun will expand in size and will swallow up the space that our planet occupies with its fiery furnace and that every element of the earth will be consumed.

Knowing that these things will take place verses 11 and 12 ask:

What sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God...?

Now Peter is not trying to frighten people into being good, into doing what is right, he is merely indicating that Christians ought to live their life with the expectancy of such a conclusion of the earth at the Second Advent (at the Second Coming of Christ Jesus).

Peter is indicating that Christians ought to live a **Spiritually Prepared Life**, that Christians ought to live in expectancy of the New Heaven and of the New Earth in which righteousness dwells, that Christians ought to live with **integrity** and **according to the WORD OF GOD**, being on guard lest they fall into the ERRORS of those who have NO REGARD for God's Laws or God's WORD and thus lose their STABILITY with the Real Truth.

To know Christ personally opens up the possibility of living life to its fullest.

To become more mature as a Christian means that we will grow into a deeper and deeper personal relationship with Christ.

This growth of becoming more mature as a Christian usually is a gradual daily process that transforms us into a closer living relationship with Christ until we are perfectly confident in God's promises for us, God's promise that **our sins are forgiven**, God's promise that **we are freed from the power death and the devil**, God's promise that **we have the gift of eternal life**.

Of this growth as a Christian, Martin Luther writes:

This teaching is not learned all at once, nor can it be understood speculatively. It must be learned by daily use and exercise amid the temptations of the world, the devil, and the flesh, amid despair, distrust, and innumerable other horrible things. And without these exercises it can not be kept. Foolish people, therefore, are taken in. After reading one or more passages of Holy Scripture and hearing maybe one sermon, they think they have already learned this teaching (of Christianity) completely. They can see that in other, lesser arts we do not immediately become masters. Much less can it happen in this greatest teaching of all, that we immediately trust in God from the heart and despise all the perils of the world, death, and the devil. These things can not be learned in one day, but practice and immense exercise and a singular gift of God are required.

So, do we take time to be in God's WORD daily?

Do we come to Worship Services to really hear God's WORD preached, sung and prayed?

Do we practice and exercise our faith so that we continue to grow in God's GRACE and in THE FAITH so that we have STABILITY in the knowledge of God's WORD and in the promise of SALVATION?

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, strengthen us through Your WORD so that we may not fall into ERROR, and that we may truly rejoice at the Second Advent of Christ Jesus even as it comes with a loud noise, even as it comes with all the elements being dissolved with fire, even as it comes with everything we have done being disclosed

Amen.