

Peter's Epistles #41

The Day of the Lord Perspective

2nd Peter 3:1-18

(also available on-line at ichthys.com)
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Paragraph I (vv. 1-2)

(1) Beloved, this is already the second letter I'm writing to you, in [both of] which I have been trying to revive your memory [of the truth] to the end of a perspective [regarding your Christian lives, which is] uncompromised [by any false teaching] (2) in remembrance of the words spoken by the holy prophets and of the commandment of our Lord and Savior [passed down by His] apostles.

2nd Peter 3:1-2

The Second Epistle (v.1):

Beloved, this is already the second letter I'm writing to you, in [both of] which I have been trying to revive your memory [of the truth] to the end of a perspective [regarding your Christian lives, which is] uncompromised [by any false teaching].

2nd Peter 3:1

We have seen previously that Peter's theme in his first epistle was the comfort of believers undergoing significant suffering – in which all believers who are advancing spiritually ultimately share. We have also seen that our primary means of endurance in suffering is the truth of the Word of God through which, when stored in our hearts by faith, the Spirit comforts us, encourages us and empowers us to persevere. Since truth is the *sine qua non* for coping with suffering, all attacks on the truth must be vigorously repulsed for the process of comfort, encouragement and empowerment through the Spirit to be successful in bringing believers safely through all of the exceptional testing of undeserved suffering. For that reason, Peter stresses here the unity of what he has written to these churches previously with the contents of this second letter: growing in the truth is the flip-side of the coin to rejecting false teaching which undermines the truth.

As obvious as this dual principle may seem, it is precisely when believers find themselves under exceptional pressure that they may be most likely to doubt themselves, doubt their application, doubt their teachers, doubt, that is, the truth – and thus, instead of acting with patience and in trust of the Lord, be tempted to look for other, more immediate solutions to the problems they are presently confronting. Here, therefore, Peter is "preaching to the choir", so to speak, rather than addressing those who have turned aside to Gnostic teachings or who are dabbling in them. He ends his letter with a strong appeal to the faithful in the churches of Asia Minor, encouraging

them to stand fast in their good position of faith in the truth – or rather to keep advancing in the truth, because in fact there is no standing still in the Christian life, only advance or retreat (however incrementally in either case).

But with respect to the progress you have made, keep on advancing *in the same way!*
Philippians 3:16

(6) So then, *exactly as you [originally] received* Christ Jesus as [your] Lord, be walking in Him [in the very same way], (7) rooted and built up in him, established in the faith just as you were taught, overflowing with thanksgiving.
Colossians 2:6-7

Revive Your Memory: Having a proper *spiritual* perspective (Gr. *diaonioa*, etymologically "through-the-mind", thus "mind-set") on what our eyes see and our ears hear in the devil's world is essential for any mature believer. That "mind-set" has to be based on God's truth, and lots of it, starting first and foremost with the basic doctrines found in the Bible with which every Christian should be conversant but not limited to any part of scripture or its doctrinal content.

(1) Therefore leaving [behind] the elementary teaching about the Christ, *let us press on to maturity.*
Hebrews 6:1a NASB 1995

Peter says very explicitly that his purpose has been a "revival of memory", memory of the truth once believed and thoroughly understood, with the ultimate purpose of said truth being foremost in the hearts and minds of his recipients and ready to be used and applied with every step of their Christian walk. That is the perspective or mind-set Peter desires all Christians to possess, namely, having the truths of scripture (all of them ideally but, as we all fall short, as much truth as possible) on the tips of our tongues and in the conscious thinking of our minds, cherished in our hearts and diligently remembered and so as to be available to be applied at all times.

Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors.
Psalm 119:24 NIV

(13) On this account take up that full armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the day of trouble and, when you have completely done everything [necessary (in spiritual preparation)], to stand your ground. (14) So then do stand your ground, having girded your loins *with truth* and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and having shod your feet with the [shoes] of preparation for [sharing] the gospel of peace. (16) And at all times take up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery missiles of the evil one. (17) And [in this spiritual warfare] put on the helmet of salvation and gird on the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of truth.
Ephesians 6:13-17

Admittedly, this sort of readiness in the Christian walk is the stuff of spiritual maturity and takes much practice to achieve. Importantly, we can also see from Peter's bringing up of this issue a second time here that it will not happen by itself as a matter of course:

(12) Therefore, I will always make it my practice to be reminding you about these matters, even though you know them and are standing fast in the truth you have received; (13) and I consider it right, as long as I am still in this [physical] body (lit., "tent"), to continue to be awakening your remembrance of them, (14) [especially] knowing as I do that [the time of] the putting off of my [physical] body (lit., "tent") is swift[ly approaching] – just as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me; (15) and [that is why] I am also eager for you to be able at all times after my departure to bring these matters to remembrance.

2nd Peter 1:12-15

Moreover, in our context, Peter explicitly mentions that he desires this perspective, this mind-set of proper Christian application of the truth well-learned, then diligently remembered and applied, to be "uncompromised" as well. The Greek word used here, *eilikrinēs*, means, literally, unmixed, pure and sincere, and thus uncompromised by contamination with anything false. Peter clearly has in mind the pollution of false teaching which was presently afflicting these churches – and which, of course, remains a ubiquitous threat in our own day. To be spiritually safe, therefore, to continue one's spiritual advance without compromise, requires the dual approach of aggressive remembrance and application of the truth on the one hand, and careful discernment and steadfast rejection of all that is not true on the other.

To make an application to our own day, Christians who have "learned some truth" and made a good spiritual advance but have then backed off on their prior positive approach (of daily Bible reading, prayer, accessing orthodox Bible teaching, and the whole-hearted attempt to make use of these truths in the Spirit throughout the day) are vulnerable to being tripped up by "teaching" which is in fact not worthy of the name. If a Christian allows him/herself to become bored with doing things the right way – and it is unquestionably difficult to fight the Christian fight in a truly godly manner day in and day out without any lapses – and so falls into a pattern of lukewarmness, then in short order that Christian is likely to find him/herself looking for "more interesting" fare. Just because the "teaching" that is substituted for a solid, godly source is not at first glance clearly satanic does not mean that it is also good – or that it is not at its core genuinely bad. For while it is true that just because something is appealing does not make it bad, necessarily, if the real reason why a person is surfing the internet is to search for more exciting presentations of the Bible, and if titillation rather than content is the standard of discrimination used, then it should not come as a great surprise if instead of something decent said person ends up falling into Gnosticism instead (or any manner of other false teachings), something dressed up as being biblical, and making use of various attractive and tantalizing modes of presentation to disguise what is in fact the devil's potage. It is just such a lackadaisical and compromising approach that Peter here seeks to combat.

(3) For the time will come when they will not put up with sound teaching, but will [instead], desiring to have their ears scratched, heap up by their own [devices] teachers to match their specific lusts. (4) And they will turn their ears from the truth and resort instead to fictions.

2nd Timothy 4:3-4

In Remembrance of the Words and the Commandment (v.2):

(2) . . . in remembrance of the words spoken by the holy prophets and of the commandment of our Lord and Savior [passed down by His] apostles.

2nd Peter 3:2

The scope of remembrance is here defined by Peter. He commends remembering the truth communicated by the Spirit in the Old Testament ("the words spoken by the holy prophets") and in the New ("the commandment of our Lord and Savior [passed down by His] apostles"). In other words, every bit of truth contained in the Bible is what believers need to know, to believe, and to make a point of aggressively recalling and applying to our lives at all times. Needless to say, this is no low bar and requires a lifetime of commitment to come anywhere close to achieving. But anything we do to search out the truth, to listen to the truth, to believe and then to remember, to recall and to apply that truth is all to the good. Just because we may not be able to do everything is no excuse to give up so as to do nothing.

(1) God, from antiquity having communicated to our fathers in the prophets at many times and in many ways, (2) has in these last days communicated to us in a Son, [the One] whom He has appointed heir of all things, [the One] through whom He created the universe.

Hebrews 1:1-2

The essential difference between the Old and New Testaments is set out for us clearly in the quote above. The truth has always been the truth, but that truth has been shown forth more brilliantly in the person of our Lord. Because of His incarnation, Jesus Christ is more clearly revealed in the New Testament. He Himself the living Word of God (Jn.1:1-14; 1Jn.1:1-4; Rev.1:2; 19:13); He Himself has always been the message and is now also the means of communicating God the Father's truth in this world ever since He came into it in bodily form.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 NKJV

The "holy commandment", as we saw in the previous chapter (2Pet.2:21), is the commandment to believe in Jesus Christ, to love Him and the Father – and our brothers and sisters in Christ – with all our hearts. That is the gateway whereby we enter into the kingdom of God, and that kingdom, along with all of the teachings related to it, was passed down by "His apostles" in the form of the New Testament.

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

1st John 3:23 NKJV

Faith in Christ and love for one another based upon love of Him sum up the application of the Christian life based upon a full understanding of and faith in the entire Word of truth, the mind of Christ (1Cor.2:16), the holy Bible. Getting to the point where these truths become with consistency part and parcel of who we are and how we behave requires time spent in the Bible, in prayer, and in Bible study – and in determined remembrance and application of what we have

learned and believed through much trial and testing. Failure to be "remembering", however, usually goes hand in hand with a sloppy approach to or an abandoning of the process of spiritual growth entirely. From there, it is no long journey to becoming open to the siren song of the false teachers Peter is warning against. All the more reason for Peter to come back to this important point – and all the more reason for us to take it to heart.

Paragraph II (vv. 3-13)

(3) Keep this foremost in your mind: in the end times cynics will ridicule [the truth], acting out of their own selfish lusts (4) and saying, "Where is that 'return' He promised? Everything is the same now as it was since the beginning of the world, since the time our forefathers passed on." (5) But it escapes their notice in asserting this, namely, that there were heavens long ago too, and an earth, which was [re-]established (Gen.1:2ff.) out from under water (i.e., the "waters below") and through [the midst of] water (i.e., the "waters above") by the Word of God – (6) [and that it was also] through these two [sets of waters] that the world of that time (i.e., in Noah's day) was deluged by water [from above and below] and destroyed. (7) Now the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire by that same Word (of God), preserved for the day of judgment and the destruction of godless men (i.e., at the end of history). (8) Let not this one fact escape your attention then, beloved, namely that one day is like a thousand years in the Lord's eyes, and a thousand years like one day (i.e., the final "day" will span a millennium). (9) The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise as some think; rather He is exercising patience for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring all instead to come to repentance. (10) For the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, a day in (i.e., over the course of) which the heavens will depart with a roar (i.e., at the end of the Millennium), the very elements will ignite and dissolve, and the earth and everything which has been done upon it will be laid bare [for the Lord's inspection] (i.e., the last judgment). (11) Since then all these things are destined to disintegrate in this way, [consider] what sort of [Christians] we ought to be, [devoted to] holy and godly conduct, (12) as we wait with apprehension and eager expectation the advent of the Day of God (i.e., the 2nd Advent). For on that day (i.e., at the end of it) the heavens will burst into flame and dissolve, and the elements will catch fire and melt. (13) But we are awaiting new heavens and a new earth just as He promised – [a world] where [only] righteousness dwells.

2nd Peter 3:3-13

Cynics on the Cusp on the End Times (v.3-4):

(3) Keep this foremost in your mind: in the end times cynics will ridicule [the truth], acting out of their own selfish lusts (4) and saying, "Where is that 'return' He promised? Everything is the same now as it was since the beginning of the world, since the time our forefathers passed on."

2nd Peter 3:3-4

Cynics: Since our Lord's resurrection, "the end" has ever been imminent (Matt.3:2; 4:17; Rom.13:11-12; 1Cor.7:29; Phil.4:5; Heb.10:25; Jas.5:8; 1Pet.4:7; 1Jn.2:18; cf. Lk.21:8; Rev.1:3;

3:11; 22:7; 22:12; 22:20).¹ So while this sort of ridicule will intensify the closer we come to the end (and we can surely see this in our own day), the individuals here also include not only the false teachers of the previous context but the unbelieving world at large of that time. The word used here which we are translating "cynics" literally means mockers or scoffers and refers to any number of people who find fault with the scriptures through applying erroneous tests which they believe "prove" them wrong. Mind you, the motivation for so doing is a desire not to have to pay any attention to God and His truth as hardhearted individuals of this sort make their way through this world – acting as if it will never end and their lives will go on forever as well. But any fool ought to be able to see that he/she will not live forever – and that ought to occasion some consideration of God and what lies beyond inevitable mortality.

(7) Surely, no one can redeem a man[*s* life from God's hand], no one can pay a ransom to God for him. (8) For the redemption price of a life is too precious for Him to relent forever, (9) that one should live on forever, and not see corruption. (10) For everyone sees that [even] the wise die. They [too] perish along with fools and those who lack common sense, and they leave their wealth behind to others.

Psalm 49:7-10

What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?

Psalm 89:48 NIV 1984

These cynics are wrong to think and live as if they possessed immortality. They certainly know in their heart of hearts that they will die, but unbelievers often live and act as if they never will. In the manner of the Pharaoh of the exodus, God allows those who reject Him to harden their hearts against these truths of inevitable death and judgment in order for them to be able to act as they choose and so to make clear what was really in their hearts (Ex.9:16).² Peter assures us here by reminding us of the inescapable coming of eternity that their assumptions about the world are incorrect as well, something believers know by faith.

By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God, so that what we see (i.e., the material world) has not come into being from the things presently visible.

Hebrews 11:3

And just as the world was created by God in the precise manner He describes for us in the Bible, despite the laughable speculations of unbelievers, it will also end right on schedule according to God's, not man's, timetable.

(1) But concerning the times and the seasons (i.e., the time-line of future prophecy and its specific events), brothers, you have no need for anyone to write you. (2) For you

¹ See CT1: Introduction: Biblical Sources for the Tribulation, section V, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ".

² For the mechanics, see BB 4B: Soteriology, section II.2.d, "Phase One Hardening of the Heart: Darkening of the Truth".

yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord (i.e., God's eschatological time of judgment beginning with the Tribulation) is coming just like a thief in the night. (3) When [people] are saying "Peace!" and "Safety!", at that precise time destruction will fall swiftly upon them, just like labor pains on a pregnant woman.

1st Thessalonians 5:1-3

The methodology of scoffers, mockers, cynics and all who claim that scripture is not the truth can be seen clearly from our context passage. These types misunderstand, misinterpret and misapply scripture, and then use their faulty understanding of it as a grounds for claiming by insinuation that the Bible is not true. In this instance, the fact that God has not brought on the end times *yet*, that Jesus Christ has not returned *yet*, does not in any way mean that He will not do so at precisely the right time. He certainly will. And the fact that things may appear to have been proceeding in a certain way for a very long time does not mean that they have always been this way. They have not. In fact, of course, the present constitution of the world dates back only ca. four thousand five hundred years to the great flood (which produced all manner of dramatic changes on earth).

Skeptics of the sort mentioned here assume that because *they personally* do not know any better, that therefore what they think they know must be the truth. As is often the case with the ignorant, these sorts also tend to be arrogant and even confident in their stupidity. While posing no problem for strong, mature believers, this projection of confidence in the lies being told, can often trip up the spiritually weak who may find such conviction persuasive and incline them to give false teachers and their teaching a hearing. This phenomenon was not unknown in Peter's day, and so he prudently moves to undermine this predictable and predicted avenue of assault on the truth against weak believers who have no ready answer for such ridicule (1Tim.4:1-3; 2Tim.3:1-9).

(17) Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have departed from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and [through this lie] they ***destroy the faith of some.***

2nd Timothy 2:17-18 NIV (cf. Acts 1:6; 1Thes.4:13-17)

(1) So we ask you, brothers, in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [discussed in chapter one, verses 3-12], and our assembling together to Him [in resurrection at His return (cf. 1Cor.15:51-54)], (2) that you not be so easily moved from your correct understanding [of these matters], nor disturbed [by doubts about what you should know to be true] – not even if [this "new information" purports to come] through a spirit, or an [inspired] word or a letter supposedly from me, declaring that the Day of the Lord is already upon us. (3) ***Do not let anyone deceive you in any way.*** For [the 2nd Advent cannot come] unless the Apostasy [the great falling away of the faithful in the first half of the Tribulation] has already occurred, and the man of lawlessness [antichrist] has been revealed [an event also occurring in the Tribulation], that "son of destruction" (i.e., characterized by, author of, and doomed to destruction), (4) the one who will oppose and exalt himself against every so-called god and object of worship to such a degree that he will take his seat in the temple of God and represent himself as being God. (5) ***Don't you remember that while I was still with you I was explaining these things to you?***

In the passages immediately above, we find the opposite lie to the one in our context. No, the resurrection and the second advent have *not* occurred *yet*. Anyone who says otherwise is a liar and a deceiver. And, no, just because the resurrection and the second advent have not occurred *yet* does not mean that they will *never* – and at God's perfect time and according to His perfect plan (despite what the cynics, scoffers and mockers Peter rebukes here falsely maintain). Believers understand both sides of this proposition – through faith.

True History (v.5-6):

(5) But it escapes their notice in asserting this, namely, that there were heavens long ago too, and an earth, which was [re-]established (Gen.1:2ff.) out from under water (i.e., the "waters below") and through [the midst of] water (i.e., the "waters above") by the Word of God – (6) [and that it was also] through these two [sets of waters] that the world of that time (i.e., in Noah's day) was deluged by water [from above and below] and destroyed.
2nd Peter 3:5-6

It Escapes their Notice: The ignorance of arrogance is on full display here. Although these cynical, skeptical, and disdainful opponents of the truth "assert" that the material world has *always* been as it is seen today, we know from the biblical record that they are gravely mistaken in these hubristic assumptions (even if – or perhaps especially if – they are "scientifically based").

By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God, so that what we see (i.e., the material world) has *not* come into being *from the things presently visible*.

Hebrews 11:3

Heavens and Earth Long Ago:

(1) Before all else, God created the heavens and the earth. (2a) *But* the earth *came to be* ruined and despoiled . . .

Genesis 1:1-2a

When Peter says "there were heavens long ago too, and an earth", he is referring to the original creation documented in Genesis 1:1 above. Readers of this ministry should know very well that earth was God's original dwelling place, the place where He communed with His creation before Satan's rebellion and fall.³ The earth at that time was perfect in every way and there was as yet no darkness. The devil's revolt changed all that. After an unspecified period of time (wherein Satan and the one third of the angels he persuaded to follow him defiled that original earth), this revolt resulted in God's judgment upon the original earth and upon the entire universe, casting

³ These matters are the subject of The Satanic Rebellion series. See also BB 2B: Eschatology, section I, "God's Plan for Human History".

everything into darkness and freezing it into place beneath the *tehom*, the cosmic deep.⁴ That is the situation described in verse two of Genesis chapter one – "***But*** the earth ***came to be*** ruined and despoiled" – a description ***not*** of the state of things in the original creation of verse one but of the status of the universe following God's judgment upon it pursuant to the devil's revolt. In other words, there is a gap of time between perfect creation and subsequent ruination brought on by divine judgment as a result of the satanic rebellion. Of all this the mockers and scoffers of Peter's day had no idea – anymore than their successors in our own day who likewise prefer their own ignorant assumptions to serious biblical study.

Reestablished out from under Water and through Water: This refers to the re-creation of the earth during the six Genesis days. God's plan for refuting the devil required the creation of another creature also possessing the image of God, one of far lesser power who would even so (eventually and in part) choose to obey God where the devil had refused to do so.⁵ To accomplish this refutation – which demonstrated God's justice in condemning the devil and his followers and thus acted as a sort of judicial appeal – required a concomitant re-creation of the heavens and the earth to give this new creature a liveable habitat (the process described in Genesis chapter one). As part of that process, the waters of the *tehom*, which covered the earth and filled the heavens, were divided so as to make space for a reestablished heavens and a habitable earth (Genesis 1:6-7): earth was reestablished "out from water" (the creation of the "space" or firmament which sequestered the heavenly "waters above"⁶), and the remaining waters on the surface of the earth were collected, grouped into oceans and seas to reveal dry land (Genesis 1:9-10) – dry land coming up "through the water" as a place for mankind to live.

Deluged through the Two Sets of Waters: This refers to the miraculous opening up in Genesis 7:11 of "the springs of the great deep" (i.e., the waters below) and "the floodgates of the heavens" (i.e., the waters above) which resulted in the entire earth being inundated to the depth of over twenty feet above the highest mountains (Gen.7:20), something entirely impossible according to modern scientific understanding of the universe – but which actually happened. The consequences to the earth of the great flood were enormous and have been discussed before.⁷ Suffice it to say here that all of the assumptions made today about the world of that time are dependent upon the conviction that such a monumental event never took place – and are thus *prima facie* invalid.

Thus, with this short Bible lesson, Peter entirely demolishes the derisive comments of these unbelievers and persuasively so – for any and all who put scripture ahead of what the eye can see and the ear can hear.

⁴ These matters are discussed in [SR 2: The Genesis Gap](#).

⁵ See [SR 1: Satan's Rebellion and Fall](#), and [SR 3: The Purpose, Creation and Fall of Man](#).

⁶ See [CT 2B: The Heavenly Prelude](#), section I, under "The Sea"; and [SR 2: The Genesis Gap](#), section II.3, "The Sea".

⁷ See in particular in [SR 5](#), section II.8.e, "The Problem of Science and the Bible".

By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God, so that what we see (i.e., the material world) has not come into being from the things presently visible.

Hebrews 11:3

Fate of the Present Earth (v.7):

(7) Now the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire by that same Word (of God), preserved for the day of judgment and the destruction of godless men (i.e., at the end of history).

2nd Peter 3:7

The Present Heavens and Earth: Our present world is now the third iteration of "heaven and earth", the first being original paradise and the second being the Eden of Adam and Eve along with the world into which they were expelled after the fall, "destroyed" by the great flood.⁸ Physically, the earth today and the universe in which it is set are the same locales originally created in Genesis 1:1. However, the functional differences between these three are so vast that Peter is allowed by the Spirit to describe them as essentially different creations, with the first two already "destroyed" (radically changed to the point of extinguishing life in both cases), and the third one, our present heavens and earth, awaiting its own "destruction". The new heavens and the new earth which will replace our present world will indeed be a "new" creation in every way, the "old" having been incinerated to a sub-atomic level (Rev.20:11; 21:1).

For the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, a day in (i.e., over the course of) which the heavens will depart with a roar (i.e., at the end of the Millennium), the very elements will ignite and dissolve, and the earth and everything which has been done upon it will be laid bare [for the Lord's inspection] (i.e., the last judgment).

2nd Peter 3:10

Fire: Fire is the premier instrument of divine judgment as may be seen from the ultimate end of all who oppose God: the lake of fire (cf. Dan.7:9-11). Fire also characterizes the judgment our Lord Jesus Christ underwent to purge away our sins seen, for example, in the holocaust offerings which represent the "sweet savor" of His fiery spiritual death on our behalf (Eph.5:2) and in the burning bush which burned continually but was not consumed (Ex.3:2-3). Judgments by fire are thus ubiquitous in scripture;⁹ in this verse, Peter combines the fiery end of the universe as God cleanses the world to make way for the eternal state "where righteousness [alone] dwells" (2Pet.3:1) with the directly preceding Last Judgment, at the conclusion of which all the "godless" unbelievers and demons will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

⁸ See [SR 1: Satan's Rebellion and Fall](#), section II.6, "The Seven Edens".

⁹ E.g., fire and brimstone rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen.19:24), the baptism of fire at the commencement of the Millennium (see [CT 6: Last Things, section I.5](#), "Fire on Magog"), and the devouring by fire of the rebels who encircle Jerusalem at the conclusion of the Millennium (Rev.20:7-9), to name but three prominent examples.

(11) And I saw a throne, a great white one, and Him who was sitting upon it (i.e., Jesus Christ). From His presence the earth and the heavens fled, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, both the great and the insignificant, standing in front of the throne. And books were opened; and another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead were judged on the basis of the things written in the books, according to what they had done. (13) For the sea gave up the dead which were in it, [that is] death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them, and each person was condemned according to what they had done. (14) And death and Hades (i.e., all unbelievers) were cast into the lake of fire. And this is the second death: the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:11-15

Far, therefore, from being anywhere close to the truth, the scoffers and cynics whom Peter is correcting here are completely off the mark: their confidence is based entirely upon a belief in false information, that is to say, lies. Instead of a world proceeding forever in the same manner human memory is able to recall, absolute destruction is right on the doorstep for all "godless men" – such as them.

One Day like a Thousand Years (v.8):

Let not this one fact escape your attention then, beloved, namely that one day is like a thousand years in the Lord's eyes, and a thousand years like one day (i.e., the final "day" will span a millennium).¹⁰
2nd Peter 3:8

One of the main points of misunderstanding the cynics are relying on is the disconnect they see between scriptures which speak of our Lord's return and the by then significant passage of time since the cross. Peter does not expect the naysayers to pay heed to his corrective remarks, but he does find it important to remind believers that the mere passage of time is nothing to God who invented time and who stands outside of the time and space which He has created. For mere human beings, time can seem massively long, whether we are contemplating the events of ancient history or are merely waiting for a bus. For God, one is the same as the other – and both were incorporated into His perfect plan in the divine decrees before time began.¹¹

(9) "Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
(10) Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure'."

¹⁰ For the implications of this statement for understanding God's plan for human history in the seven millennial days, see [SR 5: The Seven Millennial Days of Human History](#).

¹¹ See [BB 4B: Soteriology](#), section I.2.a, "Foreknowledge and the Divine Decrees".

Isaiah 46:9-10 NKJV

Being creatures who can only exist in time and space, of course we have no frame of reference whatsoever for anything else. But believers can accept and understand that God has no such limitations, neither perceptually nor in arranging His creation in the manner He chooses. So while *we* may feel, for example, that God is taking His time in answering a particular prayer concern we may have, in fact mature believers at any rate should understand that God's timing is perfect – because He invented time, planned out the course of time to the nth detail, decreed it all ahead of time, and is presently working everything out for the absolute good of those who love Him at just the right time and precisely according to His perfect plan of salvation (Rom.8:28).

(10) My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long,
"Where is your God?" (11) Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within
me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.
Psalm 42:10-11 NIV

Patience is a virtue (Prov.25:15; Eccl.7:8; 2Cor.6:6; Col.1:11; 3:12; Jas.1:2-4; 5:10), but one which even mature believers may find difficult to deploy when under intense pressure (even if we have read the book of Job many times). As in the passage quoted here, we see throughout the Psalms believers wrestling with their anxious thoughts in just such situations – and then coming back to spiritual center as they rally their faith. Accepting the necessity of suffering and of the need to wait on the Lord – however long He sees fit to have us wait – is never easy. But mature believers fight that fight as the Psalmist above did, and put their confidence in the Lord to deliver us *at just the right time*.

(2) And Abram said, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" (3) And Abram said, "Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." (4) And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." (5) And he brought him forth abroad, and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." (6) And [Abraham] believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.
Genesis 15:2-6 KJV

Abraham, as we know, still had a long wait before Isaac was born – but he trusted the Lord. We can be sure that the believers addressed by Peter in our context did not have to wait a thousand years for deliverance from the pressures of the mockers and scoffers who were harassing them – or even as long as Abraham. True, the Lord did not return in their day, but the cynics were all eventually swept away – in the course of time at God's perfect time – and are presently in Torments awaiting the Last Judgment, while all of Peter's correspondents are presently in the third heaven awaiting the resurrection.

(18) The Lord knows the days of the upright,
And their inheritance shall be forever.
(19) They shall not be ashamed in the evil time,

And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
(20) But the wicked shall perish;
And the enemies of the Lord
Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish.
Into smoke they shall vanish away.
Psalm 37:18-20 NKJV

The comeuppance of all who cast doubt on our Lord's return, including for many who are alive in our own day, will soon be paid pack directly into their laps. For that return is not far off. It may have taken more than a thousand years – two thousand in fact – but God has arranged things perfectly to occur in His perfect timing after the completion of the Church of Jesus Christ.

They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"
Revelation 6:16 NIV

The Lord is Not Delaying (v.9):

The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise as some think; rather He is exercising patience for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring all instead to come to repentance.
2nd Peter 3:9

We all get impatient at times waiting for the fulfillment of our prayers, especially when we are suffering through some particularly difficult test. Few of us have the patience of Job, who waited much longer for his deliverance than is apparent from a casual reading of the book. In the previous verse (2Pet.3:8), Peter reminded us that the length of time is nothing to God and in fact not really important. It is our deliverance that counts, and that relief is made all the more sweet for having to have waited patiently for it.

(2) Brothers, when you are being beset with all manner of trials, take pains to be joyful.
(3) For you should keep in mind that this testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) So let your perseverance develop fully, that you may become fully mature and entitled to a full reward, having been found lacking in no respect.
James 1:2-4

For it is through such patient waiting that our faith is strengthened even as we pass the test that results in a great eternal reward in addition to our temporal deliverance.

Blessed is the man who stands firm in testing, because when he has been [tested and] approved he will receive the crown of life which [God] has promised to all who love Him.
James 1:12

In this verse (2Pet.3:9), Peter gives another important perspective on patience, reminding us that this fight we are fighting is not just about us – it is also about others who have been "appointed to eternal life" (Acts 13:48). If the time were shortened contrary to God's perfect plan, those now

not saved but destined for it would not have their opportunity for salvation . . . just as we who are reading Peter's epistle today would never have had ours if the second advent had occurred during the lifetime of the original recipients.

(12) "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? (13) And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. (14) In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost."
Matthew 18:12-14 NIV

[God] who wants all men to be saved and come to accept the truth.
1st Timothy 2:4

Not "all" will be saved, of course. Far from it. But it is an important part of the plan of God to allow everyone created with the image of God to have that chance – because Christ died for all.

And He Himself is the atonement for our sins, and not just for ours, but also *for the entire world*.
1st John 2:2

The Day of the Lord (v.10):

For the Day of the Lord will come like a thief, a day in (i.e., over the course of) which the heavens will depart with a roar (i.e., at the end of the Millennium), the very elements will ignite and dissolve, and the earth and everything which has been done upon it will be laid bare [for the Lord's inspection] (i.e., the last judgment).
2nd Peter 3:10

The Day of the Lord: As we have seen in previous studies, "the Day of the Lord" in scripture refers to the time of God's fulfillment of all of His promises and prophecies through Jesus Christ.¹² That "Day" is sometimes limited in biblical description to the very day of Christ's return, the second advent.

(6) Howl, for *the Day of the Lord* is near, all destroying from the Almighty. (7) Therefore will every hand hang slack and every human heart melt, and they will be dismayed. (8) Convulsions and pain will seize them, and they will writhe like a woman about to give birth. They will look at each other in astonishment, their faces ablaze. (9) Behold, *the Day of the Lord* is coming, a mighty day of anger and intense wrath, to make the earth desolate and remove her sinners from upon her. (10) For the stars of heaven and the constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will grow dark on its course and the moon will not pour out its light. (11) Then will I punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will bring an end to the arrogance of the proud and bring down

¹² See especially CT 1: Biblical Sources for Studying the Tribulation, section IV.1.b, "The Day of the Lord Paradigm".

the haughtiness of the ruthless. (12) I will make men more rare than gold, and mankind than the choice bullion of Ophir. (13) Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will quake from its place on account of the anger of the Lord and on the day of His fierce wrath.

Isaiah 13:6-13

(14) The great ***Day of the Lord*** is near, very near and coming quickly. The sound of ***the Day of the Lord*** will be one of warriors roaring bitterly. (15) That day will be a day of wrath, a day of constraint and pressure, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and deep gloom, (16) a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the high corner-towers. (17) For I shall bring distress upon mankind, and they will walk about like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord. And their blood will be poured out like dust, and their innards like excrement. (18) Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the anger of the Lord. And all the earth will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. For He will bring all the inhabitants of the earth to a complete, yes, a terrifying end.

Zephaniah 1:14-18

However, since, as we have just seen, with the Lord, "one day is as a thousand years", this phrase can also refer to the entire millennial day of Christ's rule, His entire thousand year kingdom over the course of which all of the promises to the Jewish people will be fulfilled (as will be also all remaining and as yet unfulfilled biblical prophecies).¹³

(20) ***In that day*** the remnant of Israel, the survivors of Jacob, will no longer rely on him who struck them down but will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. (21) A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will return to the Mighty God. (22) Though your people be like the sand by the sea, Israel, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. (23) The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land.

Isaiah 10:20-23 NIV

Destruction of the Present Heavens and Present Earth: As the passages above demonstrate, first and foremost the Day of the Lord is a day of deliverance for Israel and of destruction for her enemies – with the battle of Armageddon and all of the second advent judgments primarily in view.¹⁴ But as Peter's use of the term also shows, that "day" will last through the second advent (and the judgments associated with it which last longer than one twenty-four hour day), through the Millennium, and all the way to the very last judgment upon the heavens and the earth, their destruction – so as to be replaced with the new heavens and the new earth, a place where only "righteousness dwells" (2Pet.3:13).

(25) Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. (26)

¹³ See CT 6: Last Things, section I.6, "The Regathering and Purging of Israel".

¹⁴ See CT 6: Last Things, section I, "The Second Advent Judgments".

Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing *You will change them and they will be changed*.

Psalm 102:25-26 NASB

And I saw a throne, a great white one, and Him who was sitting upon it (i.e., Jesus Christ). From His presence *the earth and the heavens fled, and no place was found for them*.

Revelation 20:11

(1) And [then] (i.e., at the conclusion of the last judgment) I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth [appear]. For the previous heaven and the previous earth *had passed away*.

Revelation 21:1a (cf. Is.65:17; 66:22)

Everything Laid Bare: By this expression, Peter is referring to the final judgments which precede the coming of eternity, namely, the evaluation of the lives of all millennial believers and the last judgment of all unbelievers from throughout history (i.e., the "sheep and goats" judgment: Matt.25:31-46). As our Lord told us, even things "spoken in the ear" will eventually be "shouted from the roof-tops" (Lk.12:3; cf. Matt.10:27): nothing will remain hidden forever, whether bad or good; everything will be brought forth and examined in judgment before the Lord ere He brings eternity to pass (cf. Ps.90:8).

(13) Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. (14) For God will bring every deed into judgment, *including every hidden thing*, whether it is good or evil.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NIV

"For there is *nothing covered* that will not be *revealed*, nor *hidden* that will not be *known*."

Luke 12:3 NKJV

This [examination will take place] on the day when God will judge *the secret things* of men through Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Romans 2:16

For there is *no created thing* [which can remain] *invisible* before Him. Everything is naked and *laid bare* to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Hebrews 4:13

Holy Conduct and Expectation (v.11-12a):

(11) Since then all these things are destined to disintegrate in this way, [consider] what sort of [Christians] we ought to be, [devoted to] holy and godly conduct, (12a) as we wait with apprehension and eager expectation the advent of the Day of God (i.e., the 2nd

Advent).¹⁵
2nd Peter 3:11-12a

The prospect of the coming destruction of the entire universe and the subsequent inevitability of all of their evil words and deeds being called to account by the Lord should have given the scoffers of verse three pause. So should it do for us all.

So if you are calling upon a Father who renders judgment upon each man's work in a [completely] impartial way [and you most certainly are], then [you should make it your practice to] live the remaining time of your [temporary] sojourn here [on earth] in [Godly] fear.

1st Peter 1:17

The temporary nature of this life and of this universe ought indeed to be a prod to all believers to turn away from placing our primary focus and interest upon what happens in this soon-to-be-replaced world and our very short sojourning in it, and strive instead "with apprehension and eager expectation" for the soon-to-come eternity with the Lord we love and in company with all our fellow believers in the city He has made for us: New Jerusalem (cf. Heb.13:14). Soon enough, we will all be standing before the judgment seat of Christ, a prospect that ought to fill us with "eager anticipation" for receiving the rewards we are presently earning through diligent spiritual growth, progress in our Christian walk, and service to the Lord, but also with "apprehension" for the burning up of whatever is otherwise, the "wood, hay and stubble" of which no Christian life is totally free and clear (1Cor.3:11-16).¹⁶

(10) For we must all stand before Christ's tribunal, so that each of us may receive recompense for what he has accomplished through this body, whether it be good or worthless. (11a) Since then we understand what it means *to fear the Lord* (i.e., in anticipation of this judgment), we are [trying to] persuade everyone (i.e., to run a good race).

2nd Corinthians 5:11a

The time is drawing ever nearer (Rom.13:11). Even for those who will not live to see that return in these bodies, we are only ever a heartbeat away from being with the Lord. And we are all going to find ourselves before His judgment seat in what will seem by then a mere blink of the eye – and nothing can stop or delay it. At that moment, standing before Jesus Christ, the smallest coin of His good pleasure will be revealed to be of more value than the entire present universe – and infinitely and eternally so. That is an important perspective to keep firmly in mind whenever we grow fatigued in running this race.

¹⁵ Here we have an example of "the Day of the Lord" alternatively described as "the Day of God". For a listing of all such alternatives, see CT 1: Bible Sources for Studying the Tribulation, section IV.1.b, "The Day of the Lord Paradigm".

¹⁶ For the details, see CT 6: Last Things, section I.7, "The Judgment and Reward of the Church".

(7) So be patient, brothers, until the coming (*parousia*, 2nd Advent) of the Lord. Consider: the [good] farmer waits for the earth [to yield its] precious crop, waiting patiently for it until it receives the late and early rains [which make it grow]. (8) So then, [see to it that] you too exercise [such] patience, [and] steady your hearts, because ***the return of the Lord has drawn near***. (9) Brothers, do not grumble against one another so that you may not be judged [for it]. Behold, ***the Judge*** [Jesus Christ] ***is standing in front of the door*** (i.e., His return and our final judgment are imminent)!
James 5:7-9

The New Heavens and the New Earth (v.12b-13):

(12b) For on that day (i.e., at the end of it) the heavens will burst into flame and dissolve, and the elements will catch fire and melt. (13) But we are awaiting new heavens and a new earth just as He promised – [a world] where [only] righteousness dwells.
2nd Peter 3:12b-13

In contrast to the present heavens and earth, which, as Peter affirms here again (covered under "the Day of the Lord" above), will be completely and utterly annihilated in the etymological sense of that word, we believers are waiting in hope, confident expectation, of something much better, namely, a brand new universe wherein there will be nary a taint of sin or decay or death or corruption. On that glorious day, where there was darkness, there will be only light. Where there was inevitable death, there will be life eternal. Where there was sorrow, tears and suffering, there will be only joy and delight. We will all be together on that blessed day to come, the Church of Jesus Christ, praising in perfect unison the Lord who bought us free from this world of sin and death as one spotless Bride, honoring Him, singing praises to Him, with a unity and happiness that defies present understanding. That is His due. And that is our blessed future. The wonders of our eternal life have yet to be brought to light.

But as it is written:
"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."
1st Corinthians 2:9 NKJV

As mentioned in this ministry many times in the past, scripture mainly describes our eternal life in terms of the absence of negatives – no more death or pain or strife or sorrow or loss or toil – because we presently lack a proper frame of reference to appreciate how marvelous our resurrection bodies and our lives in New Jerusalem will be.¹⁷ But of this we may be absolutely sure: everything that is to come will be amazingly wondrous in every way – not only for the absence of all that is onerous in this world but especially on account of all the eternal blessings lying yet beyond our ken. So we are right to be waiting in eager expectation for that glorious day to come. For He has promised it.

¹⁷ For what scripture does allow us to say about these things, please see CT 5: Armageddon and the Second Advent, section V, "The Resurrection of the Lamb's Bride", and CT 6: Last Things, section VII, "New Jerusalem and the Eternal State".

Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
Isaiah 60:1 NKJV

Marana Tha! ["Return to us, O thou our Lord!"]
1st Corinthians 16:22

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior
Jesus Christ.
Titus 2:13 KJV

Paragraph III (vv. 14-18)

(14) Therefore, beloved, in expectation of [all] these things, make it your ambition to be found spotless and blameless by Him, [living] in peace. (15) And consider our Lord's patience to mean deliverance, just as also our brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him [by God], (16) as he also states in all his letters when he speaks of these matters. There are in [his epistles] some things which are difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable are [wont to] distort to their own destruction as they also do the other scriptures. (17) So do you, beloved, guard yourselves [against these false teachings], now that you have been forewarned, so that you may not fall from your solid position [of faith], swept up in the error of those who have no regard for any restraints. (18) Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen!
2nd Peter 3:14-8

Spotless and Blameless in Peace (v.14):

Therefore, beloved, in expectation of [all] these things, make it your ambition to be found spotless and blameless by Him, [living] in peace.
2nd Peter 3:14

Spotless and Blameless: While these words are synonymous, spotlessness refers to the believer's outside, blamelessness to the inside. That is to say, believers in Jesus Christ should, in emulation of Him, give the appearance of godliness and this appearance should be genuine, not hypocritical and Pharisaical (Matt.23:27).

(18) For you know that it was not with perishable things [like] silver or gold that you were ransomed from the futile manner of life passed down to you by your ancestors, (19) but [you were redeemed] with precious blood, like that of a lamb *without spot or blemish*, [that is, by the blood] of Christ.
1st Peter 1:18-19

What we are being asked to manifest, it is important to clarify, is a genuine reflection of our godly walk with Jesus Christ in our outward presentation and *not* absolute sinlessness. For we all need our feet washed from time to time (Jn.13:1-17), and this is why we are given the

mandate for and opportunity to confess our sins (Ps.32:5; Matt.6:12; Lk.11:4; 1Jn.1:9).

Even though "blamelessness" covers what is truly important, namely, true godliness on our inside, Peter also feels constrained to add the quality of "spotlessness" as something we are expected to exhibit on the outside as well. Some believers who are, generally speaking, walking close to the Lord occasionally give a bad impression for largely superficial reasons. If a believer always presents a slovenly appearance, for example, this can give unbelievers an unnecessarily bad impression of that Christian and, by transference, of Christ and Christianity as well. If a believer is in other respects godly but uses language in a questionable or undignified way, the same result may occur. And even our attitudes are more visible to others through our demeanor than we often realize. So if a Christian makes a practice of looking sullen and unhappy, for example, that presentation too is problematic for putting the best face on our "witness of the life" for Jesus Christ. So while it is very important to steer clear of hypocrisy and of legalism of any sort (it is what is on the inside that matters most: 1Pet.3:3-4), we do also need to keep in mind that we represent our Lord Jesus (2Cor.3:18; 5:20).

As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.
Ecclesiastes 10:1 NIV

Peace: Peace (Greek *eirene*, cf. "Irene"; Hebrew *shalom*) is the natural state of the believer here in the devil's world. That is to say, it *should* be. Entering into the peace of God's rest is what all believers should strive to do, even when they find themselves upset for any reason, and in that peace they should endeavor to stay at all times. Maintaining our posture of peace is our fulfillment of the fourth commandment during the Church Age (Ex.20:9-11). The Law now having been fulfilled (Rom.10:4; Gal.3:24-25; cf. Rom.7:4; 8:1-4), instead of a one day a week Sabbath of rest to appreciate the Lord and honor Him, one which commemorated the release of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Deut.5:13-15), we Christians are required to maintain a moment by moment Sabbath rest of peace with the Lord, commemorating our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness into his glorious Kingdom of light (Col.1:13).

(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, *peace*, patience, kindness, uprightness, faith,
(23) humility, self-control. Against such things, *there is no Law*.
Galatians 5:22-23

(9) So there does remain a "Sabbath day's rest" for the people of God. (10) For he who has entered into [God's] rest has himself ceased from his works just as God did from His own. (11) Let us therefore be *eager to enter into that* [continual and spiritual] *rest*, lest anyone fall [from grace] following the same pattern of disobedience [as the Exodus generation did].
Hebrews 4:9-11

It should be noted that this peace we are to pursue, while not entirely restricted to our relationship with God (i.e., having peaceful relations with other believers and with everyone else if possible is a great blessing and recommended: Prov.16:7; Eph.4:3), most such biblical passages are speaking not about good relations with other human beings but primarily about the peace of faith-rest *with the Lord* that we are commanded to maintain in our daily walk.

(14) For He Himself is our *peace*, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity between us, (15) by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements in His [own] flesh, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] *peace*, (16) and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind].

Ephesians 2:14-16

By virtue of being "in Christ", we believers do have "peace" with God positionally and in principle, having been reconciled to the Father by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.¹⁸ Once saved, however, believers are also called upon to make this positional attribute fully experiential, that is, to put into practice the peace that belongs to us by being believers in Jesus Christ.

"*Peace* I leave for you; *peace* I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you."

John 14:27

So now that we have been justified by faith, *let us take hold of the peace* [we have] with God [the Father] through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1

And *let the peace* of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

Colossians 3:15 NKJV

Pursue peace [with God in company] with everyone (i.e., as all other believers should be doing as well), and sanctification, without which no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

As in the dual mandate in the verse in Hebrews directly above, "spotlessness and blamelessness" in the verse we are studying also have to do both with sanctification, the "defense side" of the Christian life, but also with the other side of the coin, the "offense side" of the Christian life. This second side of the dual mandate is represented in both passages by the expression of our need to be aggressively grabbing hold of God's "peace" and living under it at all times. Such true "entering into rest/peace" requires – and is a reflection of – serious spiritual growth. For as we all know, there are many things in this life which are apt to disrupt that peace, very often being the result of attacks from the evil one.

You will keep in *perfect peace* him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 26:3 NIV

"These things I have spoken to you, *that in Me you may have peace.*"

John 16:33a NKJV

¹⁸ See BB 4A: Christology, section II.9, "Reconciliation", and BB 4B: Soteriology, section III.2.j, "Union with Christ".

And *the peace of God* which surpasses every thought will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:7

Now may the Lord of peace himself *give you peace* at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.

2nd Thessalonians 3:16 NIV

Thus, the Christian greeting of "peace" found throughout the New Testament is not some amorphous pabulum (e.g., Lk.24:36; Jn.20:19; Rom.1:7; Tit.1:3; 2Pet.1:2; 3Jn.1:15; Rev.1:4; *et passim*), but a reminder of the blessed status of rest in the Lord to which we are all meant to aspire. In fact, if we are not already living in peace, we ought to be actively *pursuing* it.

Let him seek peace and *pursue* it.

1st Peter 3:11b NKJV

Flee also youthful lusts; but *pursue* righteousness, faith, love, *peace* with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

2Tim.2:22 NKJV

Therefore let us *pursue* the things which make for *peace* and the things by which one may edify another.

Romans 14:19 NKJV

Patience Means Deliverance (v.15-16a):

(15) And consider our Lord's patience to mean deliverance, just as also our brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him [by God], (16a) as he also states in all his letters when he speaks of these matters.

2nd Peter 3:15-16a

Patience Means Deliverance: The principle Peter is referring to here is the very same one discussed in verse nine of this chapter, namely, that God's perfect timing in all things takes into account the opportunity all should justly have to accept Jesus Christ.

The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise as some think; rather He is exercising patience for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring all instead to come to repentance.

2nd Peter 3:9

Thus, the "patience" here is the Father's tolerance of the evil false teachers and their supporters whose conduct is vexing the recipients of Peter's epistle, being troubling to them not only because of the understandable aversion to false teachers and false teaching on the part of those who are genuinely moving forward spiritually in the truth, but also because of the persecution and resultant suffering these individuals have been causing to fall upon the heads of the people of God. God's "patience", as we have seen, is not unlimited, and though we often wear such things hard (cf. Eccl.8:6), we know that God's righteous judgment is imminent and impending, with the

entire stretch of human history being as nothing to Him (Ps.90:4; 2Pet.3:8): in due time He will repay all in the proper coin.

Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the Lord repaying his enemies all they deserve.
Isaiah 66:6 NIV

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
Romans 12:19 NIV

(2) For you yourselves know full well that the Day of the Lord (i.e., God's eschatological time of judgment beginning with the Tribulation) is coming just like a thief in the night.
(3) When [people] are saying "Peace!" and "Safety!", at that precise time destruction will fall swiftly upon them, just like labor pains on a pregnant woman.
1st Thessalonians 5:2-3

The apostle Paul made this same point in his teaching (e.g., Rom.2:4), and we are reminded that many of these churches were founded as a result of his first and second missionary journeys (Acts 12-14 and Acts 16 respectively). It was important for Peter to make the connection between Paul's original teaching and Peter's words here to show that, in addition to Jude's intervening epistle, the Word of God is the same, regardless of the personal traits and stylistic characteristics of the apostle who is given by the Spirit of God to write it.

And the Word became flesh and tented among us. And we beheld His glory, a glory like that of a one and only Son from [the] Father, full of grace and truth.
John 1:14

Jesus Christ, [the living Word of God], yesterday and today the same, and unto the [end of] the ages.
Hebrews 13:8

As also the Other Scriptures (v.16b):

There are in [his epistles] some things which are difficult to understand, which the ignorant and unstable are [wont to] distort to their own destruction as they also do the other scriptures.
2nd Peter 3:16b

Compared, for example, to the gospels, Paul's Greek style is, admittedly, not an easy one to read or interpret. The Spirit gave all writers of scripture leeway to use their own personalities, vocabulary and style, in composing the perfect message that He directed them to produce.¹⁹ Rather than being a drawback, this feature of scripture has the advantage of providing us with the

¹⁹ These and related issues are discussed in detail in BB 7: Bibliology: the Study of the Bible.

same truth – for all scripture contains the same core message and all points of truth are identical in all of the books of the Bible when properly understood – from a variety of points of view, thus making that truth more understandable through that variation of presentation to all manner of persons from all sorts of different backgrounds, something that would not necessarily have been the case with a homogenized uniformity of style.

Peter's closing words here, "as they also do the other *scriptures*", undeniably mark out the Pauline epistles as part of the Word of God, the canon of scriptures. They cannot be reasonably interpreted in any other way, neither in English nor in Greek, and especially since he had also just affirmed that Paul had "written (i.e., his epistles) to you according to the wisdom *given to him* [by God]" (2Pet.3:15). And just as Peter understood very well that Paul's epistles were scripture, the same was true for himself with this very epistle he was writing. The Spirit never left writers of scripture in the dark on this point.

(10) Even as they foretold this salvation that was to come to you, the prophets of old diligently investigated and inquired about this [gift] of grace, (11) being eager to discover the precise time the Spirit of Christ within them was signifying as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories [of salvation, among other things] that would follow [the cross]. (12) For it was revealed to them that in prophesying these things, they were not so much serving themselves as they were you – and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.

1st Peter 1:10-12

(16) For I did not follow concocted tales in making known to you the power and the coming return of our Lord, Jesus Christ, but was an eyewitness to His majesty. (17) For when He had received honor and glory from God the Father, these words sounded forth to Him from God's majestic glory: "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased." (18) And these words I myself heard as they were delivered from heaven, for I was with Him on the holy mountain (cf. Matt.17:1-8). (19) Yet I consider the prophetically inspired Word (i.e. the Bible) even more reliable (i.e., than what I saw with my own eyes). You too would do well to pay the closest attention to this [prophetically inspired Word], just as to a lamp shining in a dark place (cf. Ps.119:105), until the day dawns, and the Morning Star rises (i.e. the Living Word, Jesus Christ, returns), (20) pondering in your hearts this principle of prime importance: no single verse of prophetically inspired scripture has ever come into being as a result of personal reflection. (21) For true prophecy has never occurred by human will, but only when holy men of God have spoken under the direction and agency of the Holy Spirit.

2nd Peter 1:16-21

That Peter felt the need to mount this defense of Paul's writing is significant. This means that part of the attack on the truth being launched by the false teachers, the defeating of whose deceptions is the main theme of Peter's letter, was the very belittling of Paul's epistles which he here refutes. The fact that scripture may be difficult to understand at times is no justification for ignoring it, far less for excluding it from the canon by one's own personal and arbitrary standard. Anyone who takes that approach with *any* part of the Bible should be immediately marked out as

a false teacher on that basis alone. So it seems from this reference that these Gnostics were not only wrongly attempting to add to the words of God (their own false teachings), but also to expunge genuine parts of the Bible to abet their devious frauds. That is understandable, because we find in Paul's epistles, as we have seen, some of the clearest refutations of Gnosticism in the New Testament (e.g., 1Cor.2:1-8; Gal.4:3; 4:9; Col.2:1-3; 8-10; 2:20; 1Tim.6:20-21a; cf. Rom.15:4; Eph.1:10; 1:21-23; 3:19; 4:10; 4:13; 5:18; Col.1:9; 1:19; 1:25; 4:12; 4:17).²⁰ There is nothing more dangerous – nor more indicative of false teaching – than attempting to add to or subtract from the Word of God.

"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it."

Deuteronomy 12:32 NKJV

(18) I bear solemn witness to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, [that] if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues written in this book. (19) And [that] if anyone takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his share of the tree of life and of the holy city which have been written [about] in this book."

Revelation 22:18-19

To take this tack of presuming to stand in judgment over the canon is characterized here by Peter as "ignorant and unstable": a Christian would have to be hopelessly spiritually immature and uninformed about the most basic principles of truth to do so, as well as having set his/her spiritual foundation on "shifting sand" instead of on the solid rock of Jesus Christ – and thus apt to follow the likes of the Gnostics or any other false teacher who might strike their fancy (a combination of factors which often lead to apostasy).²¹

(24) "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: (25) and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. (26) But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: (27) and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

Matthew 7:24-27

Guard Yourselves (v.17):

So do you, beloved, guard yourselves [against these false teachings], now that you have been forewarned, so that you may not fall from your solid position [of faith], swept up in the error of those who have no regard for any restraints.

²⁰ See the extensive discussion in Peter #39: False Teachers, False Teaching, and False Organizations: A Preface to 2nd Peter Chapter Two.

²¹ See BB 3B: Hamartiology, section IV.6, "Apostasy and the Sin unto Death".

Here Peter recaps the essential contents of his entire letter. "Forewarned is forearmed", it is often said, and supplying his charges in the churches of Asia Minor with the appropriate warnings against false teachers and false teaching contained herein has been Peter's main purpose in writing, having been directed by the Spirit to do so. In contrast to the "unstable" individuals who have turned away from the fellowship or have one foot in the church and another in the Gnostic camp, the sheep Peter endeavors here to protect are still maintaining their stable, "solid" position of faith in the truth. They are to be commended for this, given the sustained attack against them dating back before Peter's oversight to Jude's day and before that to Paul's.

Yet in spite of all the clever machinations of the evil one manifest in the seductive teachings of the Gnostics, these believers have so far persevered and would in the main continue to do so throughout Peter's short remaining life (with his impending martyrdom: Jn.21:18-23; 2Pet.1:13-15), and then into the time of the apostle John's superintendence (i.e., represented by the "seven churches" of Revelation chapters two and three). Peter is not given to know that. Therefore he justifiably issues the strongest possible warning to these "beloved" fellow members of the Body of Christ: those who are tempting them to stray are guided by no genuine love for the Lord at all. They have "no regard for any [such] restraints", as they wander "in error" far from the truth.

Herein Peter shows his "pastor's heart", taking God's own view of the matter, "who wants all men to be saved and come to acceptance of the truth" (1Tim.2:4; cf. 2Pet.3:9). That same solicitous concern for his charges was also characteristic of the apostle Paul as well (and of any pastor-teacher worth his salt):

(5) For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain. (6) But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you. (7) Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. (8) For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. (9) How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

1st Thessalonians 3:5-9 NIV

Grow in Grace (v.18):

Now grow up through the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! To Him be the glory both now and unto the day of eternity. Amen!

2nd Peter 3:18

Grow in Grace: As readers of Ichthys probably know very well, the above is the "masthead verse" for this ministry – and for very good reason. We become Christians in the first place by putting our trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, believing in Him, His perfect person with two natures, divine and human since the incarnation, and His perfect work, the "blood of Christ", His

payment for all our sins and the sins of the entire world in the darkness on the cross. But we are not taken out of this world the moment we are saved. We are left here to glorify our Lord by our continuing faith response to Him, a response that is only possible beyond a very rudimentary level through a concomitantly continuing taking in of the truth of the Word of God. For the knowledge Peter mentions here is "of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ", meaning that biblical knowledge, biblical truth, derives directly *from* Him and is quintessentially all *about* Him.

(12) [It is] not that I have already gotten [what I am striving for], nor that I have already completed [my course]. Rather, I am continuing to pursue [the prize] in hopes of fully acquiring it – [this prize for whose acquisition] I was myself acquired by Christ Jesus.

(13) Brethren, I do not consider that I have already acquired it. This one thing only [do I keep in mind]. Forgetting what lies behind me [on the course] and straining towards the [course] ahead, (14) I continue to drive straight for the tape, towards the prize to which God has called us from the beginning [of our race] in Christ Jesus. (15) So as many as are [spiritually] mature, let us have this attitude (i.e., of focusing on our spiritual advance and reward and not getting hung up on what lies behind: vv.13-14), and if in any matter your attitude is off-center, God will reveal that to you (i.e., assuming you are mature and are advancing as you should). (16) But with respect to the progress you have made, ***keep on advancing in the same way!***

Philippians 3:12-16

(6) So then, ***exactly as you*** [originally] ***received*** Christ Jesus as [your] Lord, ***be walking in Him*** [in the very same way], (7) rooted and built up in him, established in the faith just as you were taught, overflowing with thanksgiving.

Colossians 2:6-7

Scripture often describes the increase of our faith and our moving ever closer to the Lord in this life through hearing, believing and applying the truth in terms of "growth".²² Peter tells us here that God's grace, His generous and favorable provision of everything we need to grow, plus knowledge of the truth of the Word of God, the knowledge of Jesus Christ who is the very Word of God, are really the only things we have need of here in this life. He provides us with all the logistics necessary to supplement our study of the Bible, including the absolutely essential teaching of the Bible without which no one can progress far. And we are told, grow! This is a command, and one that encapsulates our whole purpose here in this world after salvation. As long as we are growing – by taking in the Word, believing it, applying it in times of testing especially, and, ideally and eventually, helping others do the same through the gifts we have been given – we are accomplishing God's plan for our lives. And the end of that successful carrying out of His will for us on this earth is nothing but blessed.

(3) May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be praised, who has in His great mercy caused us to be reborn to a hope which lives through Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead, (4) and to an inheritance which will never be destroyed, defiled, or dimmed, but which is being guarded in heaven for us, (5) who are ourselves also being

²² For spiritual growth in general, see BB 6A: Peripateology: the Christian Walk; and section II.2 there in for "Spiritual Growth Analogies".

kept safe by God's power and our faith in Him to an ultimate deliverance ready to be unveiled at the end of time. (6) In anticipation of this ultimate deliverance, your joy overflows, though at present it may be your lot to suffer for a time through various trials (7) to the end that your faith may be shown to be genuine. This validation of your faith is far more valuable than gold, for gold, though it too is assayed by fire, ultimately perishes. But your faith, when proven genuine in the crucible of life, will result in praise, glory and honor for you at the glorious return of Jesus Christ. (8) Though you have never laid eyes on Him, yet you love Him. And though you cannot see Him at this present time, yet you have faith in Him. For this reason you rejoice with an inexpressible joy that bespeaks the glorious future to come, (9) when you shall carry off in victory the ultimate prize – the [eternal] deliverance of your lives – which is the very purpose and objective of this faith of yours.

1st Peter 1:3-9

"His Lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.' "

Matthew 25:23 NKJV

Scripture gives us much encouragement to do what we ought to be doing in this life, namely, drawing closer to Jesus Christ every day through spiritual growth, passing tests, and producing for Him (e.g., the three crowns of reward).²³ But there is another reason for us to take to heart here Peter's command to grow, making spiritual growth our top priority in this life: it is what our Lord and Master Jesus Christ wants us to do.

"If you love Me, do what I tell you to do."

John 14:15

As we do grow spiritually through the truth, through "the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ", we can likewise be sure of growing in grace – which is God's favor upon those who with whom He is well-pleased (Gen.6:8; Ex.33:17; Prov.3:34; Acts 15:11; Eph.2:8-9; Jas.4:6; Rev.1:4; 22:21), and nothing is better than that.

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

Luke 2:14 NIV

I have written to you briefly through Silvanus, a faithful brother in my estimation, encouraging you and testifying to you that this is God's true grace. Stand fast in respect to it.

1st Peter 5:12

Doxology: All that Peter wrote was for God's glory. All that we say and do and think ought to be focused on glorifying the Father and our dear Master and Savior, the very Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us. Anything good we

²³ See CT 6: Last Things, section I.7, "The Judgment and Reward of the Church".

have in this life has come from Him. Anything worthy we have accomplished in this life has been done by Him, and through Him, and for Him. The end of all things is at hand. In short order, we shall all see the glory of God unveiled in perfect, eternal bodies capable of standing in and appreciating His glorious presence. All glory has come from Him and will return to Him. For He is glory itself (Ex.33:18-23; 1Ki.8:11; Matt.24:30; Lk.2:9; Jn.1:14; Acts 7:55; Rom.3.23; 1Tim.6:16; Heb.1:1-3; 2Pet.1:17; 1Jn.1:5; Rev.21:23).

(5) May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, (6) so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Romans 15:5-6 NIV

We should all be able to say "Amen!" to that.

Not to us, Lord, not to us,
but to your name be the glory,
because of Your mercy,
because of Your truth.
Psalm 115:1