

2 Peter 3:1-18

Lesson 4

To some degree chapter 3:1-13 represents a single sustained argument about final judgment that is punctuated with several shifts in both tone and topic. Because of the variety of these shifts, scholars have divided this section in a great many different ways. Despite the considerable debate about how this section should be divided it makes little difference how it is divided since in reality it is all interconnected.¹

3 Ταύτην ἤδη, ἀγαπητοί, δευτέραν ὑμῖν γράφω ἐπιστολὴν ἐν αἷς διεγείρω ὑμῶν ἐν ὑπομνήσει τὴν εἰλικρινῆ διάνοιαν

3 This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you

The pastoral character of Peter's letter appears explicitly in the address of his readers as "beloved"

¹ Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude A Commentary*, in The New Testament Library commentary series (Louisville KY: Westminster

(ἀγαπητοί). This term here implies that he is addressing the “elect” of God when set against the backdrop of God’s love as it us here.² Peter then goes on to indicate that this is now the second letter that he has written to them, which as you might expect has generated an array of different proposals. These primary proposals are: (1) That he is referring to the earlier part of Second Peter and this chapter was written later than chapters one and two. (2) That he is referring to Jude. (3) That the reference is to a letter that is now lost to us. (4) That the letter referred to by this reference is First Peter. Most commentators accept he is referring to First Peter here.³

He is seeking to arouse a “sincere understanding” in them, one that is not distorted or allows them to be led astray by immoral desires.⁴ He is continuing what he began in chapter one, he is taking every opportunity to remind them of the truth of the gospel that was delivered to them

² Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2010), p. 347.

³ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, in the Word Biblical Commentary Series, vol. 50 (Waco TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), pp. 285-286.

⁴ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 287.

with apostolic authority.

**2 μνησθῆναι τῶν προειρημένων ῥημάτων ὑπὸ τῶν
ἀγίων προφητῶν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑμῶν
ἐντολῆς τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος.**

**² that you should remember the words spoken in the
past by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the
Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles.**

In this verse Peter weaves together a triple braided cord that unites his understanding of the Second Coming into the objective words of God rather than in the subjective words of man. Peter holds his powerful belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ based upon three things: (1) “the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets (2) “the commandment of the Lord and Savior (3) the words “spoken through your apostles.” Peter here defines the field of reference using scripture in such a way as to challenge his opponents to defend their own disbelief with Biblical arguments. He sets an impossible task for his opponents.⁵

⁵ David R. Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude - Sharing Christ's Sufferings*, in the Preaching the Word series (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2008), p. 246.

This verse in a very concise and foundational manner displays the core of Peter's beliefs and the source of his hope for himself and for his audience.

3 τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες ὅτι ἐλεύσονται ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν [έν] ἐμπαιγμονῇ ἐμπαῖκται κατὰ τὰς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῶν πορευόμενοι

³ First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts

Peter once gain reiterates the threat that faces his audience and describes the signs of those who are the threat to them and their sacred faith. These scoffers will come “in the last days” this phrase is descriptive of the time that now surrounds both Peter and his audience. This phrase “in the last days” represents the epoch that exists between the time of Peter's words and the second coming. The false teachers are claiming that there will be no judgment and Peter will counter this claim, made by those who are both ignorant of the past and of the future, using the threefold braided strand of the Prophets, Apostles and most importantly the

words of Jesus himself.⁶

4 καὶ λέγοντες, Ποῦ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ; ἀφ’ ἧς γὰρ οἱ πατέρες ἐκοιμήθησαν, πάντα οὕτως διαμένει ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς κτίσεως.

4 and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!”

Here Peter repeats the accusation of his opponents, perhaps even in their own words. The accusation is that nothing has changed “since our ancestors died.” The question is who are the “ancestors,” some see this as a reference to the Old Testament prophets, while others see this as a reference to the first generation of the followers of Jesus. If this truly is a taunt from the false teachers it is perhaps not of great importance who they actually meant to indicate here. Knowing who they are neither softens nor hardens their taunt.⁷

⁶ Catherine Gunsalus González, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, in the *Belief a Theological Commentary on the Bible* series (Louisville KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p. 193.

⁷ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, pp. 350-351.

The sweeping accusation that indicates that the creation is static is very intriguing because it affords an opportunity to further identify the scoffing false teachers with some form of popular Epicureanism.⁸ Here are the principal teachings of Epicurus:

Principal Doctrines

By Epicurus

Translated by Robert Drew Hicks

- 1.** A happy and eternal being has no trouble himself and brings no trouble upon any other being; hence he is exempt from movements of anger and partiality, for every such movement implies weakness.
- 2.** Death is nothing to us; for the body, when it has been resolved into its elements, has no feeling, and that which has no feeling is nothing to us.
- 3.** The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together.
- 4.** Continuous pain does not last long in the body; on the contrary, pain, if extreme, is present a short time, and even that degree of pain which barely outweighs pleasure in the body does not last for many days together. Illnesses of long duration even permit of an excess of pleasure over pain in the body.

⁸ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 351.

5. It is impossible to live a pleasant life without living wisely and well and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well and justly without living pleasantly. Whenever any one of these is lacking, when, for instance, the person is not able to live wisely, though he lives well and justly, it is impossible for him to live a pleasant life.

6. In order to obtain security from other people any means whatever of procuring this was a natural good.

7. Some people have sought to become famous and renowned, thinking that thus they would make themselves secure against their fellow-humans. If, then, the life of such persons really was secure, they attained natural good; if, however, it was insecure, they have not attained the end which by nature's own prompting they originally sought.

8. No pleasure is in itself evil, but the things which produce certain pleasures entail annoyances many times greater than the pleasures themselves.

9. If all pleasure had been capable of accumulation, -- if this had gone on not only by recurrences in time, but all over the frame or, at any rate, over the principal parts of human nature, there would never have been any difference between one pleasure and another, as in fact there is.

10. If the objects which are productive of pleasures to profligate persons really freed them from fears of the mind, -- the fears, I mean, inspired by celestial and atmospheric phenomena, the fear of death, the fear of pain; if, further, they taught them to limit their desires, we should never have any fault to find with such persons, for they would then be filled with pleasures to overflowing on all sides and would be exempt from all pain, whether of body or mind, that is, from all evil.

11. If we had never been molested by alarms at celestial and

atmospheric phenomena, nor by the misgiving that death somehow affects us, nor by neglect of the proper limits of pains and desires, we should have had no need to study natural science.

12. It would be impossible to banish fear on matters of the highest importance, if a person did not know the nature of the whole universe, but lived in dread of what the legends tell us. Hence without the study of nature there was no enjoyment of unmixed pleasures.

13. There would be no advantage in providing security against our fellow humans, so long as we were alarmed by occurrences over our heads or beneath the earth or in general by whatever happens in the boundless universe.

14. When tolerable security against our fellow humans is attained, then on a basis of power sufficient to afford supports and of material prosperity arises in most genuine form the security of a quiet private life withdrawn from the multitude.

15. Nature's wealth at once has its bounds and is easy to procure; but the wealth of vain fancies recedes to an infinite distance.

16. Fortune but seldom interferes with the wise person; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout the course of his life.

17. The just person enjoys the greatest peace of mind, while the unjust is full of the utmost disquietude.

18. Pleasure in the body admits no increase when once the pain of want has been removed; after that it only admits of variation. The limit of pleasure in the mind, however, is reached when we reflect on the things themselves and their congeners which cause the mind the greatest alarms.

19. Unlimited time and limited time afford an equal amount of pleasure, if we measure the limits of that pleasure by reason.

20. The body receives as unlimited the limits of pleasure; and to provide it requires unlimited time. But the mind, grasping in thought what the end and limit of the body is, and banishing the terrors of futurity, procures a complete and perfect life, and has no longer any need of unlimited time. Nevertheless it does not shun pleasure, and even in the hour of death, when ushered out of existence by circumstances, the mind does not lack enjoyment of the best life.

21. He who understands the limits of life knows how easy it is to procure enough to remove the pain of want and make the whole of life complete and perfect. Hence he has no longer any need of things which are not to be won save by labor and conflict.

22. We must take into account as the end all that really exists and all clear evidence of sense to which we refer our opinions; for otherwise everything will be full of uncertainty and confusion.

23. If you fight against all your sensations, you will have no standard to which to refer, and thus no means of judging even those judgments which you pronounce false.

24. If you reject absolutely any single sensation without stopping to discriminate with respect to that which awaits confirmation between matter of opinion and that which is already present, whether in sensation or in feelings or in any immediate perception of the mind, you will throw into confusion even the rest of your sensations by your groundless belief and so you will be rejecting the standard of truth altogether. If in your ideas based upon opinion you hastily affirm as true all that awaits confirmation as well as that which does not, you will not escape error, as you will be

maintaining complete ambiguity whenever it is a case of judging between right and wrong opinion.

25. If you do not on every separate occasion refer each of your actions to the end prescribed by nature, but instead of this in the act of choice or avoidance swerve aside to some other end, your acts will not be consistent with your theories.

26. All such desires as lead to no pain when they remain ungratified are unnecessary, and the longing is easily got rid of, when the thing desired is difficult to procure or when the desires seem likely to produce harm.

27. Of all the means which are procured by wisdom to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends.

28. The same conviction which inspires confidence that nothing we have to fear is eternal or even of long duration, also enables us to see that even in our limited conditions of life nothing enhances our security so much as friendship.

29. Of our desires some are natural and necessary others are natural, but not necessary; others, again, are neither natural nor necessary, but are due to illusory opinion.

30. Those natural desires which entail no pain when not gratified, though their objects are vehemently pursued, are also due to illusory opinion; and when they are not got rid of, it is not because of their own nature, but because of the person's illusory opinion.

31. Natural justice is a symbol or expression of usefulness, to prevent one person from harming or being harmed by another.

32. Those animals, which are incapable of making covenants with one another, to the end that they may

neither inflict nor suffer harm, are without either justice or injustice. And those tribes, which either could not or would not form mutual covenants to the same end are in like case.

33. There never was an absolute justice, but only an agreement made in reciprocal association in whatever localities now and again from time to time, providing against the infliction or suffering of harm.

34. Injustice is not in itself an evil, but only in its consequence, viz. the terror which is excited by apprehension that those appointed to punish such offenses will discover the injustice.

35. It is impossible for the person who secretly violates any article of the social compact to feel confident that he will remain undiscovered, even if he has already escaped ten thousand times; for right on to the end of his life he is never sure he will not be detected.

36. Taken generally, justice is the same for all, to wit, something found useful in mutual association; but in its application to particular cases of locality or conditions of whatever kind, it varies under different circumstances.

37. Among the things accounted just by conventional law, whatever in the needs of mutual association is attested to be useful, is thereby stamped as just, whether or not it be the same for all; and in case any law is made and does not prove suitable to the usefulness of mutual association, then this is no longer just. And should the usefulness, which is expressed by the law, vary and only for a time correspond with the prior conception, nevertheless for the time being it was just, so long as we do not trouble ourselves about empty words, but look simply at the facts.

38. Where without any change in circumstances the conventional laws, when judged by their consequences, were seen not to correspond with the notion of justice, such

laws were not really just; but wherever the laws have ceased to be useful in consequence of a change in circumstances, in that case the laws were for the time being just when they were useful for the mutual association of the citizens, and subsequently ceased to be just when they ceased to be useful.

39. He who best knew how to meet fear of external foes made into one family all the creatures he could; and those he could not, he at any rate did not treat as aliens; and where he found even this impossible, he avoided all association, and, so far as was useful, kept them at a distance.

40. Those who were best able to provide themselves with the means of security against their neighbors, being thus in possession of the surest guarantee, passed the most agreeable life in each other's society; and their enjoyment of the fullest intimacy was such that, if one of them died before his time, the survivors did not mourn his death as if it called for sympathy.⁹

This very long list may seem irrelevant to this discussion, but it is shocking not only how closely there is alignment with those that are opposed to Peter here, but also how closely Epicureanism aligns with modern thought. It is easy to note several prominent themes in this philosophy that align with modern themes: (1) The emphasis on pleasure; (2) The emphasis on that which is

⁹ From Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks, <http://classics.mit.edu/princdoc.html>.

sensual; (3) The emphasis on the personal security of the individual; (4) The idea that justice is fluid and not absolute. This is just to name a few. It appears that so many of the things that are a plague in modern society are naturally inherent in the human condition i.e. self centeredness.

The scoffers make the claim that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation,” which is a cosmological assertion which implies that creation is a stable entity (sounds familiar). It further opens an ideology that is consistent with Epicureanism, which stated that creation came about randomly and that there is presence of divine influence in creation (this also sounds very familiar to our modern ears).¹⁰

**5 λανθάνει γὰρ αὐτοὺς τοῦτο θέλοντας ὅτι οὐρανοὶ
ἦσαν ἔκπαλαι καὶ γῆ ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος
συνεστῶσα τῷ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγῳ,**

**⁵ They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of
God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed**

¹⁰ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 351.

out of water and by means of water,

Peter counters their conclusions with words rooted in the first chapters of Genesis. He also notes very particularly that the scoffers “deliberately ignore this fact.” Peter here accuses the scoffers of deliberately blinding themselves to the activity of God in history.¹¹ Their ignorance is self-inflicted and deliberate though they would not admit this fact.

6 δι' ὧν ὁ τότε κόσμος ὕδατι κατακλυσθεὶς ἀπώλετο·

6 through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished.

Peter then cites the flood event that took place in the time of Noah that indicating that creation is not static, but has shown massive signs of change. It is by God’s word that the world was created; and it was created from water and God uses that same water as a destructive force to bring judgment upon a wicked and unjust world and they perished, because of this change.¹² The world is indeed not

¹¹ David R. Helm, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude - Sharing Christ’s Sufferings*, p. 248.

¹² Catherine Gunsalus González, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, p. 197.

static, it changes, and there is perhaps nothing that is feared more by people who seek as their primary goals personal security and personal pleasure. This in part is reflected in the fears of people with regard to global warming.

7 οἱ δὲ νῦν οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ

τεθησαυρισμένοι εἰσὶν πυρὶ τηρούμενοι εἰς ἡμέραν κρίσεως καὶ ἀπωλείας τῶν ἀσεβῶν ἀνθρώπων.

⁷ But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless.

The meaning here is that since the world itself was created by the word of God and has already been destroyed once by God's word, we can have confidence in the future judgment that has also been decreed by God's word. The idea of an eschatological conflagration is found only here, in Second Peter, in the New Testament. Some have attributed what Peter has to say here to Stoic or Iranian influence, but there can be no real doubt that the immediate background of this is to be found in Jewish apocalyptic. The idea of divine judgment by fire is frequent in the Old Testament.

The paradigm for this is in part inspired because of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is a clear and apparent theme in the Old Testament (cf. Deuteronomy 32:22; Psalm 97:3; Isaiah 30:30; 66:15-16; Ezekiel 38:22; Amos 7:4; Zephaniah 1: 18; Malachi 4:1). In much of the Old Testament the function of this fire is to consume the wicked and not to destroy the world, but as the idea of a universal eschatology came into view (cf. Isaiah 66:15-16; Malachi 4:1) the idea of a universal conflagration also became prominent. This judgment was envisioned in terms of the flood of Genesis; it was universal in nature in the same way that the flood of Noah was universal.¹³

The destruction of the world by fire was also taught by the Iranian (Zoroastrianism) religion and was also found in the teachings of the Stoics. This type of teaching was found among a great many groups of antiquity but Peter clearly anchors his perspective here in the Old Testament by his use of the term “word.” He is not borrowing from other groups that it might have been possible for him to

¹³ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 299-300.

have contact and knowledge of in his time.

8 Ἐν δὲ τοῦτο μὴ λανθανέτω ὑμᾶς, ἀγαπητοί, ὅτι μία ἡμέρα παρὰ κυρίῳ ὡς χίλια ἔτη καὶ χίλια ἔτη ὡς ἡμέρα μία.

⁸ But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day.

In verses 8-9 Peter addresses the accusation of the false teachers that God is somehow slow in keeping His promises, especially the promise made at 2:9 “the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.” Peter rejects the idea that God is slow with a very distinctly pastoral response indicating that God is delaying the end as a mercy to those who might perish if the judgment comes prematurely. Peter quotes from Psalm 90:4 to support his supposition that God is not slow, but that He is patient.¹⁴

9 οὐ βραδύνει κύριος τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ὡς τινες

¹⁴ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 353.

βραδύτητα ἡγοῦνται, ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ
βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς
μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι.

**⁹The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some
think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting
any to perish, but all to come to repentance.**

This divine patience should, however, not be construed by anyone to be a reason to expect that judgment will never come. This statement is not intended to rule out a delay, as from a human perspective seems to be the case. Peter does however, rule out any perception that the Lord is somehow late in keeping His promise to bring about judgment. The scoffers appear to have been teaching that the return of the Lord for judgment had a set time limit (the lifetime of the apostolic generation), which, had largely, now passed and the promise had not yet been fulfilled. They were claiming it would never come to pass. Peter replies that though the Lord may seem late from the perspective of these scoffers He does not face the limit of time in accordance with human ideas. The Lord remains

sovereign over the time of the End, and defers the judgment according to His own good purpose.¹⁵

10 Ἦξει δὲ ἡμέρα κυρίου ὡς κλέπτης, ἐν ᾗ οἱ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσεται καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὐρεθήσεται.

10 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.

The unpredictability seen here is intended to inspire watchfulness in the lives of Peter's readers. This verse echoes the brief parable of Jesus at Matthew 24:43 "But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into." Peter then goes on in this section to describe the nature of the cosmic conflagration that will take place at this judgment. This is the only such image like this in all of

¹⁵ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 311.

the New Testament.¹⁶

The final phrase of this verse that speaks of things being “disclosed” has at times proved puzzling to readers because it literally is the word “found.” The idea truly must mean in this context that when these events take place all things will be revealed before the eye of God’s judgment, nothing will remain hidden or undisclosed before Him.¹⁷

**11 τούτων οὕτως πάντων λυομένων ποταποὺς δεῖ
ὑπάρχειν [ὑμᾶς] ἐν ἀγίαις ἀναστροφαῖς καὶ
εὐσεβείαις,**

¹¹ Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness,

As with all that Peter seeks to do in his epistle there is a very practical and distinct point. The point here is plain and clear and that is that since the judgment of God is going to come his audience, indeed all mankind should live in this knowledge. This knowledge that judgment will come

¹⁶ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 354.

¹⁷ Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude A Commentary*, p. 276.

should cause people to live in “holiness and godliness” because they know there is going to be an accounting, a reckoning before God.

12 προσδοκῶντας καὶ σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμέρας δι’ ἣν οὐρανοὶ πυρούμενοι λυθήσονται καὶ στοιχεῖα καυσούμενα τήκεται.

12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?

Throughout early Christian literature the term “waiting” is used to describe the idea of eschatological expectation (Mark 15:43; Luke 2:25, 38; 12:36; 23:51; Acts 24:15; Titus 2:13; *2 Clement* 23:5; etc.).¹⁸ The idea of “waiting” in some ways is much easier to understand and perhaps to explain than the word translated “hastening” (**σπεύδοντας**) which could also be translated as “striving for.” The Jewish background behind this concept, however, decisively favors the idea of hastening as the proper way to translate the term here (Isaiah 60:22b RSV: in its time I will

¹⁸ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, p. 114.

hasten it”). The idea was also prominent in rabbinic sources too, with the concept being that just as the failure to repent could delay the judgment repenting could hasten it.¹⁹ This is a powerful concept as it puts forward the notion that very much aligns with concepts which were once associated with Post-millennialism amongst churches of Christ and others. The idea was that as people repented and turned to Christ the time of the Second Coming came nearer. This was, in part, a great motivation for the tremendous evangelistic efforts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Once again the idea is that the Day of Judgment will set off a fire in the heavens that will end in the destruction that will melt the elements themselves. The word for “melting” that is used here occurs only here in the New Testament, but it is used in the Septuagint (Isaiah 63:19-64:1; Micah 1:4) of the “melting” of mountains. In this conflagration nothing will be hidden from the gaze of God, this is an indication of the absolute and perfect judgment of

¹⁹ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 324-325.

God.²⁰

**13 καινούς δὲ οὐρανούς καὶ γῆν καινὴν κατὰ τὸ
ἐπάγγελμα αὐτοῦ προσδοκῶμεν, ἐν οἷς δικαιοσύνη
κατοικεῖ.**

**13 But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for
new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at
home.**

This section concludes with another reminder of God's promises; this is a verse that refreshes the soul after all of the dark and dire warnings that Peter brings so that he can bring the people out into the wonderful sunlight of promise. Here he returns to the true intent of this letter and that is to provide pastoral guidance and care to those who have accepted and continue to follow the gospel message as sent from God and faithfully delivered by the apostles in their teachings and proclamation of the Good News.

The announcement of the new heavens and the new earth recall Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22. This theme of the

²⁰ Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, pp. 325-326.

coming of the new heavens and the new earth were common in Judaism and are also detailed in Revelation 21-22. The difference here is that most of the New Testament seems to envision a rebirth or renewal of creation rather than an entirely new heaven and a new earth (cf. Matthew 19:28; Romans 8:19-23). Second Peter is however, very clear on this point and the text indicates that everything will be destroyed and there will be an entirely new heaven and a new earth. Peter is here not trying to describe different fates to different elements of the universe; the same fate awaits it all. Everything will be destroyed.²¹

In this new heaven and new earth righteousness will be at home. This is an indication that all of the things associated with injustice and unrighteousness will have no part in the new creation. Peter here is describing the same thing that John describes in Revelation 21-22, this is heaven, the dwelling place of God amongst His people.

14 Διό, ἀγαπητοί, ταῦτα προσδοκῶντες

²¹ Lewis R. Donelson, *I & II Peter and Jude A Commentary*, pp. 278-279.

σπουδάσατε ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν
εἰρήνῃ

14 Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish;

The pastoral care of Peter once again comes to the forefront as he challenges his audience to await the things that he describes in a manner worthy of their calling. They are to be at peace and there is to be not even a hint of unrighteousness or sin in their midsts.

15 καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν ἠγεῖσθε, καθὼς καὶ ὁ ἀγαπητὸς ἡμῶν ἀδελφὸς Παῦλος κατὰ τὴν δοθεῖσαν αὐτῷ σοφίαν ἔγραψεν ὑμῖν,

15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

Peter tries to put the delay of God in bringing judgment into the proper perspective, a perspective that will truly indicate that the people of his audience are just, righteous, and caring people. In the same way that

Abraham pleaded with God to save the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and as Moses pleaded for Israel they are to regard the delay in the coming of judgment as a sign of God's desire to save the lost. It is a delay based upon the love and compassion of God. Peter here also aligns his teachings on this subject with those of his fellow apostle Paul. His desire is the same as it was from the beginning to make it plain that apostolic authority comes from God.

16 ὡς καὶ ἐν πάσαις ἐπιστολαῖς λαλῶν ἐν αὐταῖς περὶ τούτων, ἐν αἷς ἐστὶν δυσνόητά τινα, ἃ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς καὶ ἀστήρικτοι στρεβλοῦσιν ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς πρὸς τὴν ἰδίαν αὐτῶν ἀπώλειαν.

16 speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.

Peter states what all who have read the writings of Paul would surely be aware of and that is that Paul writes in a way that makes many of the things that he writes hard to understand and therefore open to twisting and

misinterpretation. Peter here seeks to both support his brother Paul while at the same time make what he has to say very clear. In doing this Peter very deliberately elevates the apostolic teachings of Paul to the same level as the Old Testament in attaching to both the appellation “Scripture.” The wisdom “given” to Paul is from a divine source in the same way that the source of the message delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament is from a divine source.

**17 Ὑμεῖς οὖν, ἀγαπητοί, προγινώσκοντες
φυλάσσεσθε, ἵνα μὴ τῆ τῶν ἀθέσμων πλάνη
συναπαχθέντες ἐκπέσητε τοῦ ἰδίου στηριγμοῦ,**

**17 You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned,
beware that you are not carried away with the error of
the lawless and lose your own stability.**

With great tenderness Peter reasons with those under his care and warns them once again not to be carried away with the “error of the lawless.” This is a very hopeful challenge on the part of Peter as he warns, but hopes for the best from his audience.

18 αὐξάνετε δὲ ἐν χάριτι καὶ γνώσει τοῦ κυρίου

ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ
νῦν καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν αἰῶνος. [ἀμήν.]²²

**18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now
and to the day of eternity. Amen.²³**

This very proper benediction is one of the most beautiful among all of the letters of the New Testament. This benediction is encouraging and hopeful and not in need of any commentary.²⁴

Synopsis

In this section Peter continues he state intent of reminding them of the words spoken to them in the past. He lays out for them that their faith rests upon this triple foundation of the words of the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles. He then disputes the claims made by the scoffers that the world remains the same as it has always

²² Aland, K., Black, M., Martini, C. M., Metzger, B. M., Robinson, M., & Wikgren, A. (1993; 2006). *The Greek New Testament, Fourth Revised Edition (with Morphology)* (2 Pe 3). Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

²³ *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (2 Pe 3:1–18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²⁴ Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, p. 358.

been by reminding them of the judgment that God has in the past brought upon the earth through the flood. Just as these words are true so are the promises of the pending return of God for judgment against the unrighteous.

Peter provides details of this judgment and the destruction that will come as being through fire and a total dissolution of the elements. This is all done very much in line with Jewish expectations of this time. He also gives them the reasons that they may perceive God to be taking a long time in bringing these things to pass. He highlights the fact that God does not perceive time in the same way as mankind does. He also cites the fact that God is not thinking of himself but of His children in delaying due to His great desire that all of His children come to repentance.

He indicates that the judgment will come at some unknown time and it will not be something that will not be noticed, as it will make a loud noise as everything is dissolved in fire. Peter's motivation for this information is to change their lives. He challenges them to live lives of

holiness and godliness in readiness for the coming judgment.

He encourages his readers with the promise of something better for those that are righteous, loyal to God. They will have a new heaven and a new earth where “righteousness is at home.” He challenges them to live in the light of this knowledge in a manner that is pleasing to God. He brings together the writings of Paul with the rest of the Scriptures and calls them to heed them as a guide for their lives.

Main Points

1. Peter in a very pastoral, caring manner both warns and encourages those that face very real danger.
2. He powerfully and forcefully reminds them that the foundation of their faith is based in the promises of God that are found in Scripture.
3. He gives them the reasons for the delay in Christ’s return, while at the same time challenging them to be

vigilant in proclaiming the gospel message as means
to hasten the return of Christ.

4. Peter encourages his audience with the promise of the
new heaven and the new earth.