

## **TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT THE LORD'S PROMISED COMING**

*3 This is now, beloved, the second letter that I am writing to you. By means of them I am awakening your sincere mind by reminding you <sup>2</sup>to remember the words previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of our Lord and Savior by your apostles.*

*<sup>3</sup>You may be sure that in the last days scoffers will come, [expressing their] scoffing, and living for their own [evil] desires. <sup>4</sup>They will say, "Where is [the fulfillment of] the promise that he will come? From [the time] the fathers fell asleep [in death] everything goes on as it has since the beginning of the creation." <sup>5</sup>[But] this they intentionally forget; [namely,] that long ago there were heavens and an earth formed out of the water and in the midst of the water by the word of God. <sup>6</sup>By those [same waters] the world of that time was destroyed, being deluged with water. <sup>7</sup>And by that same word the present heavens and earth are being preserved for fire, reserved for the day of the judgment and destruction of ungodly mankind.*

*<sup>8</sup>Do not forget this one thing, beloved, [namely], that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not negligent with regard to the promise, as some consider negligence; on the contrary, he is exhibiting great patience toward you. He does not desire anyone to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. On that day the heavens will disappear with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed by being burned up, and the earth together with the works that are in it will be exposed.*

*<sup>11</sup>Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?—[You ought to live] in holy conduct and godliness, <sup>12</sup>as you watch for and eagerly await the coming of the day of God. On that [day the] heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will be dissolved by the intense heat. <sup>13</sup>But, according to his promise, we are watching for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness resides. (2 Pet. 3:1-13)*

### **Introduction**

Suppose that one day on the street you encounter one of those opinion polls. The subject of this particular poll is The Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The surveyor asks you to respond to the following questions: Do you personally believe that Jesus Christ will return to the earth? Do you think that His return will be a visible, spectacular event? What do you think will happen at His return? When you think about Christ's return, what is your reaction? How often do you think about Christ's return? Do you believe that Christ will return during your lifetime?

When the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, the promise was made of His return:

*They were looking intently up into the heavens as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup>Men of Galilee, they said, why do you stand here looking into the heavens? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you*

*into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.*  
(Acts 1:10-11)

But as the years passed, some Christians began to wonder about God's commitment to His promise, and some scoffers began to openly ridicule the belief in that promise.

This is Peter's message: Because the Lord's word is reliable, we must maintain and, if necessary, renew, our confidence in it, despite the accusations of scoffers or the apparent "negligence" of God.

Let us now consider, "Two Things to Remember about the Lord's Promised Coming."

### **I. Remember that God Once Judged the World, ...and He will Do So Again**

At the time of Peter's epistle, perhaps some 30-35 years may have elapsed since our Lord's ascension into heaven and the promise of His return in glory (note Acts 1:10-11.) Now mockers, or, scoffers, begin to make their presence felt within the church. They are described as scoffers who are openly "*expressing their scoffing.*" As the years have passed, they have become emboldened to express their disbelief in the promise of God. They are now vocally raising the question, "Where is the fulfillment of the promise of His coming?"

They are further described as "*living for their own [evil] desires.*" The alleged "delay" in Christ's return has emboldened them to live for their lusts—they have become confident that there will not come a day of just retribution. They put no confidence in the counsel of Scripture:

*Wait for Jehovah; be strong and take heart and wait for Jehovah.* (Psl. 27:14)

*Then you will know that I am Jehovah—those who put their hope in me shall not be disappointed.* (Isa. 49:23b)

Peter provides us with an outline of their argument. "Thirty to thirty-five years have passed since His ascension, and nothing has happened; if He were coming back He would have done so by now!" Here is impatience with God's divine timetable; here is the attempt to hold God to a humanly conceived timetable. Compare their attitude with the attitude of the unbelieving Jews as recorded in Matthew 27:41-43,

*In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup>He saved others, they said, but he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel! **Let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.** <sup>43</sup>He trusts in God. **Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, I am the Son of God.** (Matt. 27:41-43)*

Let us bear in mind Jesus' teaching in the parable of the talents with regard to the time of His return: *"After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them"* (Matt. 25:19.)

Their argument continues, "Indeed, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were!" These scoffers maintain that since the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob nothing of great spiritual significance has happened. But they are disregarding the mighty acts of God that He performed in the days of Moses and Joshua, namely, the Exodus from Egypt and the entrance into the Promised Land of Canaan. Furthermore, they are disregarding the mighty acts of God surrounding the birth, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; note, for instance, those acts of God surrounding His crucifixion, acts that foreshadowed the final resurrection and His return at the end of this present age:

*And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. <sup>51</sup>At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup>They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.* (Matt. 27:50-53)

Their argument points back beyond the time of the patriarchs, "Indeed, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of the creation!" They are maintaining that since the time God created the world there has been a consistent and unbroken uniformity: the world has continued the same and undergone no change since the beginning of time—such is their argument.

At this point Peter refutes their argument by asserting that there is something they willfully—intentionally—forget, namely, the cataclysmic flood that occurred in the days of Noah.

Peter asserts that the flood was of such tremendous cataclysmic proportions that it can be described as bringing to an end *"the world of that time"* (vs. 6.) Peter begins by reminding us, *"long ago there were heavens and an earth formed out of the water and in the midst of the water by the word of God"* (vs. 5.) He is referring to the creation account as recorded in Genesis 1:1-2,6-10,

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>And the earth was formless and empty; and darkness was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved upon the surface of the waters ... <sup>6</sup>And God said, Let there be an expanse between the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. <sup>7</sup>So God made the expanse, and divided the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse; and it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. <sup>9</sup>And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so. <sup>10</sup>And God called the dry*

*land Earth; and the gathered waters he called Seas; and God saw that it was good.* (Gen. 1:1-2,6-10)

Peter goes on to write, *“By those [same waters] the world of that time was destroyed, being deluged with water”* (vs. 6.) Now he is referring to the cataclysmic flood that came as a judgment upon the world of mankind in the days of Noah:

*In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, on the seventeenth day of the second month—on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. <sup>12</sup>And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.* (Gen. 7:11-12)

Peter asserts, *“the present heavens and earth are being preserved for fire”* (vs. 7.)

Let us remember that God judged the world once, and He will do so again. Through the Old Testament prophet, the LORD warned,

*See, Jehovah will come with fire, and his chariots will be like the whirlwind, [he will come] to render his anger with fury and his rebuke with flames of fire. <sup>16</sup>With fire and with sword Jehovah will execute judgment upon all mankind, and those slain by Jehovah will be many.* (Isa. 66:15-16)

## **II. Remember that God is Not Negligent, ...He Will Surely Keep His Promise**

We must remember that God is the sovereign Lord of time. Alluding to Psalm 90:4, Peter declares *“Do not forget this one thing, beloved, [namely,] that with the LORD one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like one day”* (vs. 8.) We are controlled by time. On the one hand, time flies away from us: the hours, the days, the years, speed away like a runaway horse with man in desperate but futile pursuit. On the other hand, time holds us captive: the young child impatiently, helplessly, waits for Christmas day; the prisoner likewise waits for the day of his release. All of our life is inescapably controlled and conditioned by time: *“For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: <sup>2</sup>a time to be born, and a time to die”* (Eccl. 3:1-2a.)

But this is not the case with the LORD our God. He is above and beyond time: He is the God who inhabits eternity, as He identifies Himself in Isaiah 57:15a, *“This is what the high and lofty One—who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy—says.”* He is the everlasting God: *“Before the mountains were born or you formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God”* (Psl. 90:2.) The LORD is the Creator of time: *“And God said, ‘Let there appear lights in the expanse of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them serve as signs, to mark seasons, and days and years’”* (Gen. 1:14.) As Douglas Kelly writes, “The very first words of the Bible, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,”* teach the absolute beginning of all things (space, time, energy, matter.) ... at a

particular point in eternity, the immortal God brought everything into existence out of nothing" (*Creation and Change*, p. 57.) Based on Einstein's theory of relativity, which is now extremely well proven, Steven Hawking and Roger Penrose developed the space-time theorem of general relativity. This theorem establishes that not only were matter, energy, and space created, but time was created as well.

Indeed, the LORD our God is the Lord of time. Referring to the fulfillment of His promises, the LORD declares, "*At the appointed time, I, Jehovah, will cause it to happen suddenly*" (Isa. 60:22b.) God has appointed a set time for the fulfillment of His promises, (both the promise of redemption and the promise of judgment.) He is speeding history on to that appointed time, but He shall not allow those promises to be fulfilled pre-maturely before the divinely appointed time.

Furthermore, we must remember that the LORD is not negligent (vs. 9.) Sinful man is so prone to misinterpret the LORD's longsuffering, or patience, as negligence, note Psalm 50:21. Addressing sinful, unrepentant man, the LORD declares, "*These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought that I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face*" Because the LORD does not immediately address the sins of man and bring judgment upon him, we must not wrongfully conclude that He is negligent—such is the foolish reasoning of the wicked, which the LORD rebukes and corrects in this present passage of Psalms. The LORD's very character precludes any negligence on His part: "*God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*" (Num. 23:19.) Peter has already spoken about "*a salvation that is ready to be revealed*" (1 Pet. 1:5.) But because that salvation is inevitably accompanied by the final judgment, it will only be revealed "*at the last time.*" By way of illustration: During the democratic uprising at Tiananmen Square, Beijing, in the spring of 1989, truckloads of Communist soldiers, fully prepared, were rapidly deployed to the outskirts of the city. Although they were in place and ready to strike, they were restrained from taking action until the appointed hour when the command was given by the governing authorities.

Finally, we must remember that the day of the LORD will come "*like a thief*" (vs. 10.) The Day of Judgment has been divinely appointed and therefore it is inevitable, as the Apostle Paul warns the Athenians: "[God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising that man from the dead" (Acts 17:31.) Note that Paul informs us that Christ's own resurrection is the testimony that God is committed to justice and consequently, He will finally, in His appointed time, carry out His justice. That Final Judgment will come just as surely as the forewarned judgment came upon Old Testament Israel. Referring to the judgment of God carried out upon Old Testament Israel by the Babylonians, Jeremiah declares, "*Jehovah has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago*" (Lam. 2:17a.) But when that day comes it will come

like a thief—it will come unexpectedly upon a world that refused to take heed and refused to repent. Our Lord Jesus informs us of man’s sinful negligence: *“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. <sup>27</sup>People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all”* (Lk. 17:26-27.)

Let us remember that the Lord is not negligent, He will surely fulfill all that He has promised—both with regard to the Christian’s salvation and the judgment of the world.

### **Conclusion**

As the years have passed by, you may at times wonder about the Lord’s commitment concerning His promised return. If so, take to heart this particular passage of Scripture and heed Peter’s exhortations to remember these two things: 1) God judged the world once before, and He will do so again; and 2) God is not negligent, He will surely fulfill all that He has promised.