

December 9, 2022

## [2 Peter 3:3-13](#)

The author of 2 Peter, probably the last-written book in the New Testament, is addressed to those who have received “a faith as precious as ours” to encourage them to grow “in the knowledge of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” The writer (whom most scholars believe was not Simon Peter but wrote in his name to lend authority to his words) warns his early Christian readers against false teachers who would undermine their apostolic faith tradition and lead them astray.

In this passage, the author addresses the teaching of scoffers who doubt the Lord’s promise to return, indulge themselves, and argue that the present world will continue as it is forever. Although this letter is addressed to readers of the first/second century A.D., these issues are just as alive today.

First, the author reminds his readers that the world has not always been as it is today. He accuses the false teachers of willfully ignoring the Genesis accounts of God’s creation of the world from watery chaos, its destruction by water in the flood, and the coming judgement of the world by fire. (While the reference to fire may reflect the influence of Stoic beliefs, it also echoes the association of fire with judgement and the purification of God’s redeemed people in the Old Testament.)

Second, the writer echoes Psalm 90:4 in pointing out that God’s time is not the same as our time and so what seems to us a delay is simply a demonstration of God’s patient desire for us to repent. He refers to the judgement promised by the prophets Amos and Joel on the Day of the Lord, which, as Jesus said, will come like a thief in the night. On this Day of the Lord, all things hidden on earth will be disclosed and judged. Therefore, in consciousness of this coming revelation and judgement, we are to lead “lives of holiness and godliness,” looking forward to a “new earth where righteousness is at home.”

It is so easy for us to think that the world we know with our senses is the only reality. But that is a world that has no room for a God who is both sovereign over us and loving enough to join us in this world of suffering and injustice.

This Scripture passage reminds us that Christians have long been recognized as a people who live in this world but are not of this world. Perhaps nowhere is that

more obvious than in the observance of the liturgical calendar, the Church year that begins with Advent. This calendar reminds us that time itself has a new meaning for those who follow Jesus. No longer is time simply something that begins with the Big Bang and ends in the collapse of the universe in a black hole, or, more personally, begins with our own birth and ends with our death.

During Advent, we are especially called to look forward to a new earth, a reality of grace, mercy, and self-giving love that, though as real as what we know with our five senses, is often obscured. Let us pray then that, in this time of waiting, we may catch a glimpse of that Day of the Lord in the Christ child.

Walter DuPre